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## The Fortunate Days

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# The Fortunate Days

by

Ethel May Gate

Illustrations by Vianna Knowlton

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# The Fortunate Days

## *First Day: The Rose Garden of Persia*

**O**NCE upon a time there was a tailor of Constantinople named Hassan, who possessed a most beautiful cat. This cat had been brought by some merchants from Persia while a kitten and sold to the tailor in exchange for a fine velvet suit handsomely embroidered, so you can understand that it was a rare and costly animal and that its master prized it highly.

One evening the tailor was sitting in his garden stitching at a pair of stuffed breeches for the Grand Vizier when the cat raised its head and said:

“Master, I have a great desire to see the rose gardens of Persia where I was born. Shall we take a journey together and go thither?”

“What!” said Hassan. “Have you found a tongue in your head at last, old friend? I have

long suspected that you knew more than you chose to tell."

"You are quite right," said the cat, "but it is dangerous to attract too much notice in this city, so I kept my thoughts to myself. However, the time has come to speak. I have, as you know, nine lives, and you are a good master and I cannot imagine ever finding a better. So as we are now in the Fortunate Days, you can, if you choose, accompany me through all my lives and share the adventures which fall to the lot of every good cat. What do you say?"

"I say, let us start at once!" said Hassan.

"Then open the door of the garden," said the cat, "for I can smell a Persian caravan coming down the lane."

The tailor unlocked the door in the high white wall which enclosed his garden and stepped out into the narrow lane of the city, then he picked up the cat in his arms and fastened the gate behind him. At that moment a camel came down the lane; on its back was a silken carpet and seated on the carpet was a man with a pointed beard and a curious turban fastened with a

diamond. Behind him came a string of baggage camels laden with merchandise.

“Good sir,” said Hassan, stepping forward, “will you take me with you to Persia?”

“What is your business there?” said the merchant.

“My cat was born there and I am anxious to see the country so fine an animal came from,” said Hassan.

“It is indeed a handsome cat,” said the merchant. “Mount the camel behind me and I will conduct you thither.”

So Hassan and the cat seated themselves among the merchandise and were soon travelling as fast as the camels could carry them to Persia. The way lay across a stony desert with no water except a few wells at a long distance from each other, and they suffered greatly from heat and thirst. One evening they were resting by the side of a well when the cat made a leap in the air and caught something between its paws.

“What have you there?” said Hassan, going to the cat, and imagine his astonishment to find that it was a tiny little fairy clad in robes which glistened like a dragon-fly.

“Be careful, master,” said the cat; “she is one of the spirits who dwell among the rose gardens and can easily transport us all thither with a wave of her hand if she be so disposed.”

The tailor knelt down and respectfully begged the little fairy to step upon the palm of his hand and ascertain whether her robes had suffered any damage from the cat’s paws, for if so he would repair them as good as new.

“I do not believe you can do it,” said the little fairy; “your fingers are too big and clumsy. However, here is a great rent in my mantle; do the best you can.”

The tailor whipped out his needle and silk and sewed up the rent like lightning; then he embroidered a comet and a whole cluster of little stars over the place in silver thread so that the rent could not be seen and the mantle was more beautiful than ever.

“Well done, well done!” cried the fairy. “You are indeed a skilful tailor. Ask whatever you wish and I will bestow it on you.”

“Then deign to transport us to the rose gardens of Persia and grant us good luck when we get there,” said Hassan

“It is granted,” said the little fairy, “and when I reach Constantinople, whither I am going to visit my sisters in the garden of the Sultan, I will mention you favourably to the Grand Vizier.”

Hassan salaamed very profoundly as he thanked her and the next instant he felt himself whirled through the air and before he knew what was happening there they all were in the very middle of Persia. The merchant to whom the caravan belonged was so terrified that he fell flat on his face, but Hassan soon raised him and explained how it occurred.

“My good sir,” cried the merchant, “how can I thank you sufficiently? You have relieved me of a great anxiety. Know that I am not a merchant at all, but one of the princes of the land. The king of Persia is suffering from a painful disease which can only be cured by the leaves of a plant growing in the garden belonging to the Emperor of the Christians and which no money can buy. At the risk of my life I have obtained some of the leaves and was returning to my own country in disguise when I met you.”

“O fortunate day!” said Hassan.

“It was indeed,” said the prince of Persia. “All the roads into the kingdom are guarded by my enemies who are on the look-out to destroy me. For know, O Hassan, that he who cures the king of his sickness shall have his youngest daughter in marriage and the half of his kingdom as her dowry.”

“O joyful news!” cried Hassan. “Let us hasten, sir, to claim the reward of your valour.”

“And you, my good fellow,” said the prince, “shall live in luxury for the rest of your life, and your cat shall never want a bowl of cream and a cushion of satin to lie upon.”

Thereupon the cat purred loudly to show its satisfaction and the prince signed to them to enter one of the gardens near at hand where he had a palace. Hassan had never seen anything like the garden in his life; there were roses everywhere, climbing up the lattices, covering the walls, growing round the fountains, filling the borders and carpeting the ground with their petals. Pretty maidens were filling baskets with the flowers to make attar of roses and the air was heavy with perfume. The prince hastily conducted Hassan to his own apartments, where

they arrayed themselves in new and handsome garments. Then they mounted two gaily caparisoned horses and set out for the court, Hassan carrying the cat in his arms.

The king of Persia was almost at the point of death when they arrived and all the courtiers were lamenting for their master. The prince hastily ran forward, tore open the royal robe and laid the precious leaves on the king's heart, when lo and behold! he revived and sat up.

"Noble prince," said he, "you have saved my life and shall have the promised reward." So the princess was sent for there and then and wedded to the prince, to his great joy and contentment, for he loved her dearly.

Nor did the prince forget the tailor to whom he owed it that he had eluded his enemies and reached the king's court in safety. So Hassan was given a suite of apartments in the royal palace and a rose garden for his very own, while the cat was provided with a cushion as large as a feather bed and an immense bowl of cream.

But the same night the cat came to Hassan's bed and said: "Master, I am sick of cream and

there is not a mouse in the whole palace. Shall we return to Constantinople?"

"By all means," said Hassan. "I cannot sleep a wink for the scent of the roses, and even the food is perfumed. I am a plain man and what is the good of a rose garden to a tailor? Let us be off."

"All you need to do," said the cat, "is to bury your nose in your pillow." So the tailor did so and fell fast asleep with the cat in his arms. When he woke in the morning he was lying in his own bed in Constantinople and the cat had just caught a fine mouse.

### *Second Day: The Dragon of China*

"What is the day of the month?" asked Hassan when he had broken his fast.

"The tenth day of the month," said his servant.

"Then I have been to Persia and back in less than a day," thought Hassan to himself. "It is all a dream." But at that moment his servant said, "What a handsome suit you are wearing, master," and looking down, the tailor saw that

he was still wearing the garments given him by the prince of Persia, and he did not know what to think. So he contented himself with saying, "It is the new fashion."

The same afternoon he was sitting in his garden stitching at the breeches for the Grand Vizier when the cat said, "Shall we try again, master?" "With all my heart," said Hassan. Thereupon the cat clambered up to the top of the wall and saying, "Follow me," disappeared from sight. Hassan hastily scaled the wall likewise and let himself down on the other side, when what was his surprise to find himself in the middle of a field of rice and not a sign of the city of Constantinople to be seen! The cat had already made itself a bed in the rice straw and was contentedly washing its face. In the valley Hassan could see a number of houses with queer, pointed roofs and a pagoda hung with little bells; near at hand were some men dressed in blue cotton, with almond eyes and long pigtails.

"What country is this?" asked Hassan.

"Honourable sir," said one of the men, "this is the land of China, and the village yonder is called the Abode of Many Virtues."

“Then let us go thither,” said Hassan, so he and the cat walked through the rice fields and soon reached the village. The first thing they saw was a poor woman who rushed out of her house and began to bump her forehead on the ground, making a great outcry. “What is the matter?” cried Hassan.

“Alas, most honourable sir,” cried the woman, “I am a poor widow and my only son has gone into the fields to snare quails and has not returned. I fear the dragon has devoured him.”

“O miserable widow,” cried the neighbours. “He has surely been devoured.”

And while they lamented, there came a man wringing his hands and beating his breast. “Alas, alas!” he cried, “I am ruined. The dragon has been in my tea plantation and his fiery breath has burnt up all the shrubs like so much stubble.”

“Now by the beard of the Prophet!” cried Hassan, “is there no man brave enough to slay this dragon?”

“Honourable sir,” said the people, “come with us and we will show him to you, and you will see that it is not possible to slay such a monster.”

“For two pins I would slay him myself,” said

Hassan; and the people said, "We will give you much more than two pins if you succeed." So they all went up the hill and stood upon a rock which jutted out over the road beneath, and the tailor could see the dragon in a little valley not far off, spreading out his claws and sunning his scales and spitting fire at every breath. He had great red eyes, a long neck and tail, and a row of hideous spines down his back. Then said Hassan to his cat, "Let us put our heads together."

After a while the cat said, "Master, if I entice the monster along the road beneath this rock, can you do the rest?" and Hassan said, "That I can," for he was a right valiant tailor. Then the cat sped down the hillside to the road below and made straight for the dragon, while Hassan made the villagers roll as many big boulders as they could to the edge of the rock they were standing upon. Very soon the dragon spied the cat washing its face and made a dart towards it, but the cat was too quick and leapt back along the road, the dragon after it. The cat waited a few minutes and then was off again, the dragon following, and soon they were both coming down

the road, and making for the spot beneath the rock. When the dragon was just below, Hassan exerted all his strength and pitched an immense boulder over the edge of the rock on to the monster's back and broke it. Then all the villagers cast the rest of the boulders upon the dragon and Hassan borrowed a sword and leaping down cut off its wicked head and there was an end of it.

After that, nothing was too good for the tailor. The villagers conducted him to the house of the mandarin who governed the village and gave him a chair of lacquer and ivory and loaded his fingers with jewels. Six little maidens with flowers in their hair and tiny little feet knelt beside him and fanned him diligently, while the mandarin ordered a feast to be spread. They brought rice and raisins in bowls, and sharks' fins, and soup made from swallows' nests, and preserved eggs and puppy dogs' tails and all manner of strange things which Hassan had never heard of and did not like to eat. Meanwhile, the cat was sitting on the floor looking at the mandarin's pigtail, and as no one was paying any attention to him, he reached up and patted

the pigtail and made it bob from side to side. This annoyed the mandarin exceedingly, for it was a long and elegant pigtail and he was very proud of it. However, the cat was delighted to have found such a fine plaything, and he began to have a fine game with it. So the enraged mandarin called upon the people to catch the cat and kill it and there was the most fearful din. Then the cat cried, "Quick, master, follow me, for if I'm caught they will skin me alive; and as for you, you will never be able to eat their dreadful messes and you will die of starvation." Thereupon the cat rushed out of the house and over the garden wall, and Hassan followed, and lo and behold! as his feet touched the ground on the other side he found himself in his own garden in Constantinople and there was the cat washing its face. So the tailor gathered up his work and went into the house and straight to bed.

### *Third Day: The Palace in the Moon*

The next morning, when he awoke, the tailor said to his servant, "What day of the month is this?" And the servant said, "The eleventh day, master."

Then thought Hassan: "I have been to China and back in an afternoon, which is absurd. It was all a dream." But at that moment the servant said, "What fine rings you are wearing, master," and the tailor saw his fingers were still loaded with the jewels the villagers had given him, so he did not know what to think.

However, all that day he stitched industriously at the breeches for the Grand Vizier and in the evening he was sitting in his garden looking at the moon when the cat called to him, "Come up on the roof, master."

"What mischief are you up to now?" said the tailor. "I must see into this." So he hastened to the roof of his house and found the cat also looking at the moon. "I have a mind to pay a visit there," said the cat. "Knot the end of your girdle round my neck, hold on tightly and we will run up this moonbeam." So the tailor did so, and the cat started to run up the moonbeam as easily as a flight of stairs and the tailor went stumbling after. At first he expected to be dashed to pieces every minute, but he soon gained confidence and ran along with incredible swiftness. The jewels on his fingers flashed in the moonlight and the

people on earth said, “Behold a new and glorious constellation!”

They soon arrived at the moon and what was the astonishment of the moon princesses when they beheld Hassan and the cat!

“How did you get here?” they asked, and when they heard they were more astounded than ever. “Nobody has ever come that way before,” they said, “except the Prince of the Dreams and the lady he married”; and when Hassan heard this he thought to himself: “There, I knew I was right. This is a dream and so was all the rest.”

But the cat said, “My master is a notable Caliph of immense wisdom and learning, and nothing is too difficult for him! Moreover he is so accustomed to be surrounded by persons of intelligence that even I, his cat, can talk.”

Then said the princesses, “We see that you are indeed a most accomplished cat and we are highly honoured to receive a visit from you and your master.” Then they took them into a magnificent palace carved out of ivory and spread a collation before them; the food was served in plates encrusted with diamonds and they were waited upon by twenty little stars.

When they were all refreshed the eldest of the princesses said: "We are particularly delighted to meet you just now, for we are shortly expecting a visit from the Great Comet and his train. He is a very great magician and only arrives once in a hundred years. On each occasion when he departs he leaves a riddle for us to solve before he returns and this time we have not been able to discover the answer. You have come in the very nick of time to help us."

Then said the tailor, "What is the riddle?" And the princess answered: "It will be no trouble at all to so wise and learned a man as you. This is it:

"'What is it that begins nine times and has never been known to come to an end?'"

"That appears to be quite simple," said Hassan, "but I shall require a little time for thought and meditation." So they showed him an elegantly furnished room which would serve as a study and begged him to consider the whole palace at his disposal. As soon as the cat and his master were alone, Hassan said: "Here is a pretty scrape you have got me into. I was not afraid of the dragon of China and I would have

faced all the enemies of the Persian prince had he required it. But I am a plain man and I cannot guess riddles; moreover, I dislike magicians. Go, see if we can get back to earth."

The cat sprang out of the window and quickly returned to say that all the ladders (meaning the moonbeams) had been drawn up and the earth was in darkness.

"They mean to keep me here until I find the answer to the riddle or the Great Comet arrives," said the tailor. "Oh, unhappy man that I am! Why did I leave Constantinople?"

"Leave all to me, master," said the cat; "I will tell the princesses that you have discovered the solution but wish further time for meditation." And this he did, and the princesses were so delighted that when Hassan ventured out of his study next morning they pinned a large moon-stone in his turban and showed him all the treasures of their garden. It was a most wonderful place; the leaves of the trees, the grass of the lawns, the flowers and the very dust were of silver, and had the tailor not been tormented by the thought of the riddle, he would have been as happy as the day is long. However, the

ladders were kept drawn up and the earth remained in darkness night after night. To add to his terror the Great Comet had been sighted in the western sky and was reported to be travelling towards them at the rate of a million miles a day. "Now I am indeed lost," said the tailor. "I shall be denounced as an impostor and this wretched magician will change me into a block of stone."

"Be comforted, master," said the cat. "The moon may not withhold her light from the earth for more than a certain time, and in a few more nights the moon princesses will be compelled to let down their ladders. I have thought of something we can tell them and we must make good our escape if possible before the Great Comet arrives."

Oh, how anxiously the cat and his master watched the progress of the Great Comet through the heavens! At last the eldest of the princesses announced that he would certainly arrive the next evening soon after sundown, and the next morning the cat in great excitement told his master that he had overheard the princesses saying the ladders must be let down that very night.

"Good!" said the tailor. "I will go with the

princesses in state to greet the Great Comet, and in the flurry of his arrival we must trust to escape."

"And just before he lands tell them this rhyme," said the cat, whispering to his master.

So the tailor and his cat, surrounded by the princesses, went out at sundown to receive the Great Comet with due ceremony. And when he was so near that they could see the diamonds in his crown and almost count the myriads of stars which formed his train, Hassan turned to the princesses and said, "This is the answer to the riddle:

"A cat has nine lives and a man has but one,  
So no man can say when a cat's life is done.  
It is true you may know when one life is past,  
But can you be certain that this was the last?"

"Excellent! Excellent!" cried the princesses, and at that moment the Great Comet landed on the moon and they ran forward to welcome him.

"Quick, master!" cried the cat, and he and the tailor ran for their lives to the edge of the moon and there was a slender moonbeam hanging between them and the earth! The tailor flung him-

self upon it and slid right from the top to the bottom and the cat came rushing after. When they reached the tailor's house they both went straight to bed; and they never knew whether the answer to the riddle was the right one or not.

#### *Fourth Day: The Buried Treasure*

The next morning the tailor said to his servant, "What day of the month is it?" And the servant replied, "The twelfth day, master."

"There!" thought Hassan. "I have been a prisoner in the moon for days and days, yet only one night has elapsed on earth. I knew it was a dream." Just then the servant said, "What a fine moonstone you are wearing in your turban, master," and the tailor put up his hand and felt the jewel the princesses had given him; so he did not know what to think. However, he straightway fetched his scimitar from the wall and thrust it through his girdle. "For," he said, "no man knows what the day may bring forth."

All the morning he spent in his garden stitching industriously at the Grand Vizier's breeches, and nothing occurred. In the middle of the afternoon, however, the ground beneath him began to

heave and he was nearly thrown backwards. "Another earthquake," said the tailor to himself and looked anxiously at his house and the wall of his garden. Both house and wall, however, were as steady as rocks while the ground beneath him continued to heave violently. The tailor sprang to his feet and moved aside the cushions he had been sitting upon and was astounded to see one of the flagstones rise like a door upon its hinges and a foreign-looking man put his head out of the hole beneath. "Come along," said the man; "we want you." The cat which had been dozing quietly suddenly sprang down the hole as though it had seen a fat mouse, Hassan immediately followed and the flagstone shut into its place behind him.

The tailor descended a flight of stone steps lit by a solitary lamp which led him down and down into the earth and ended in a vaulted chamber where he found the foreign man and a number of others like him assembled. The cat was nowhere to be seen and Hassan did not like the appearance of the men; however, they greeted him civilly enough and explained that they wished to bring their property through his garden one night

and carry it down to the Bosphorus, where they would embark in a ship for foreign parts. "We have tried to pass through on several nights," said one of the men, "but the garden door is always locked, and when we tried to scale the wall, your cat set up such a caterwauling we feared it would alarm the watch and were obliged to desist."

"Why should you fear the watch if you be honest men?" asked Hassan.

"That is our business," said the men. Then they showed him what was in the chamber. The floor was covered with bowls and pitchers of every imaginable shape, fashioned of bronze and engraved with magic signs, and all were filled to the brim with gold dust, rubies, sapphires and other precious stones. Opening out of this chamber was another, and Hassan could see numbers of bowls containing emeralds, diamonds and pearls of fabulous value. Hassan was perfectly sure all these riches did not belong to the rough men before him, so to gain time he said, "Where is my cat?"

"Ah!" said the men. "Well bethought! While you are making up your mind we will find and

destroy your miserable cat." And to make sure that the tailor did not run away, they put a heavy chain round his waist and fastened it to a ring in the wall with a stout padlock. Then they went off calling, "Puss! Puss!" and began to search the next chamber and the passages which appeared to open out of it. Directly they were gone the cat crawled out of a pitcher where it had been concealed, carrying a bundle in its mouth. It leaped upon Hassan's shoulder and dropped the bundle in his arms, and what was Hassan's astonishment to find it was a tiny manikin in the dress of a miner, bound hand and foot. Hassan whipped out his scissors and cut the poor creature's bonds in a jiffy, then he held him comfortably in his arms and bade him tell him who he was and how he came in such a state.

"I am one of the gnomes of the mountains," said the manikin, "and all these treasures are mine. These wicked men discovered my hoard and, as I have power over metals but none over men, they easily bound me and brought me underground all the way to Constantinople, where they intended to escape with their booty and leave me to perish."

“Quick!” said Hassan. “If you have power over metals, unfasten my chain.” So the manikin laid his fingers on the chain, muttered three words, and the links fell apart. Then Hassan lifted him on a rocky ledge and bidding him stay out of harm’s way drew his scimitar and placed himself at the foot of the stairway by which the robbers hoped to escape. Soon they came tramping back, very angry because they had not been able to find the cat, and great was their surprise to find their prisoner free and daring them to come on. They did not wait to be invited twice, but fell upon him with a rush; however, the tailor had been to the wars as a young man and was a skilful swordsman, as they found to their cost. His trusty blade went slick! slash! slick! slash! and at every stroke a robber fell down dead. Very soon they were all disposed of and Hassan lifted the manikin down from his shelf and bade him see if all his treasure was safe.

“Most valiant tailor,” said the gnome, “fill your pockets with jewels and accept one of these pitchers of gold.”

“I thank you most humbly,” said Hassan, “but



*“Then Hassan . . . drew his scimitar and placed himself at the foot of the stairway.”*



I am a plain man and I should not know what to do with such wealth. Permit me to return to my own home."

"Alas, my brave friend," said the gnome, "your home is no more. While you have been down here five hundred years have passed away on earth. You yourself are quite white-haired and so is your cat."

The cat and his master looked at each other and lo and behold! it was so.

"Alas! alas!" cried Hassan, "what shall I do? I cannot remain here and if I return to Constantinople all my friends will be dead. I would I were dead also."

"Be comforted," said the gnome. "If you indeed wish to return to your own home and friends you can do so, but you must take nothing away for your own use. I will give you this beautiful opal which you must guard carefully to give to King Oberon the first time you set eyes on him; then you and your cat must go up these stairs *backward* and be careful not to take a single step forward until you are safe once more in your own garden. There are fifty steps and at each step ten years will fall away."

Then he led them to the foot of the stairs and carefully placed them with their backs to the stairway.

The tailor went up pretty easily, but it was very difficult for the cat, as you will see if you watch how cats usually get about.

“Good-bye, good-bye,” called the gnome after them. “It grieves me I cannot do more for you, but as for your beautiful cat, he shall be fortunate in all the remainder of his nine lives.”

So they bade him farewell and went carefully up the stairs, at each step becoming ten years younger, and at last found themselves safely in the tailor’s garden. It was night and the ladders were all let down from the moon, so the cat and his master went straight to bed and slept soundly.

### *Fifth Day: The Daughter of the Sultan*

When the tailor awoke next morning his servant was standing by his bedside with a bowl of Turkish coffee.

“What day of the month is it?” asked the tailor, and the servant replied, “The thirteenth day, master.”

“I knew it,” thought the tailor. “I could not possibly have been underground for five hundred years.” However, as he was dressing something rolled out of his pocket and when he picked it up he found it was the opal the gnome had given him for King Oberon. So he did not know what to think. However, nothing occurred all day long and in the evening he was sitting in his garden enjoying the cool air when the cat said: “Master, I am curious to know if the gnome spoke truly when he said all the remainder of my lives should be fortunate. Let us take a walk through the streets of the city.”

So the tailor opened his gate and they strolled down toward the Bosphorus. They looked in all the bazaars but the tailor saw nothing so fine as the jewels given him by the Persian prince and the moon princesses; on the other hand people began to notice his costly dress and to say, “The tailor is getting on in the world.”

“Come, master,” said the cat. “We are attracting too much attention.” So they left the bazaars and walked down a quiet alley beside the high wall surrounding the Sultan’s palace. Presently they heard a voice on the other side saying: “Oh,

dear! Oh, dear! What shall I do? I do so want to see the world.” Instantly the cat sprang to the top of the wall and looked over. “Come along, master,” he said; “here is something for you to do.”

Without stopping a second to think, the tailor scrambled up too and jumped down on the other side. He found himself in a beautiful garden and looking at a little girl of about seven years old who was sitting on the ground crying bitterly and saying, “Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I do want to see the world.”

“Don’t cry!” said the cat. “Here is my master who has been to the moon and is clever enough to show you anything.”

“O mighty magician!” said the little girl to the tailor, “I see from your dress that you have come from far-off lands, and you have dropped from the sky into my garden and you actually possess a talking cat, so I am sure you must be a very wonderful person. Pray, what are you doing in Constantinople?”

“I have an errand to Oberon, King of the Fairies,” said the tailor, “and I heard there was

a fairy dwelling in the Sultan's garden who might tell me how to find him."

"Well bethought," cried the cat, "I will find her." And away he ran among the flowers.

"Now tell me why you were crying," said the tailor to the little girl.

"Because I am so dull," she said. "All my sisters have been married and have been sent away to their husbands' palaces and shut up so that they cannot be seen. And that is what will soon happen to me."

Just then the cat came running back very importantly and purring loudly, and the little girl clapped her hands with joy to see a tiny fairy riding in state on the cat's back. It was the same little fairy Hassan had met in the desert and he knew her instantly by the comet and stars he had embroidered on her mantle. She smiled very graciously and asked what she could do for them.

"I have an errand to King Oberon," said the tailor, salaaming respectfully, "and I should be grateful if you would tell me the way to his court."

"Nothing is easier," said the little fairy. "Shut your eyes and count seven, and you will be

there." So saying she spread her wings and flew away.

"Oh, take me with you," said the little girl, so the tailor bade her stand on his slippers and hold on to his girdle very tightly, then the cat jumped on his master's shoulder, they all shut their eyes while the tailor counted seven, and when they opened them again, there they were in the very heart of Fairyland. Oh, what a beautiful place it was! Close at hand was a palace built of the purest gold, and instead of panes of glass the windows were made of precious stones which shone like a million rainbows. All round them was the loveliest country imaginable, with hills and valleys and woods, and streams like crystal, while everywhere were crowds and crowds of fairies, big fairies, little fairies, boy fairies and girl fairies; some dressed in gossamer and some dressed in brocade; some singing and dancing, and some playing on the harp; you never saw such a sight in your life!

"Oh, what a lovely place!" cried the little girl. "Let us all stay here for ever and ever!"

Just then there was a tremendous fanfare of trumpets and King Oberon returned from a boar

hunt in the Western Islands where he has extensive dominions. He smiled very pleasantly upon the strangers and giving his hand to the little girl bade the tailor and his cat follow him into his palace. When he was seated he bade them say who they were and what they wanted of him.

“I am the daughter of the Sultan,” said the little girl, “and I want to see the world.”

“It is granted,” said the king.

“I am Hassan of Constantinople,” said the tailor, “and I have an opal which was entrusted to me by a gnome of the mountains to deliver to your Majesty.”

“I have heard all about it,” said the king, as he took the opal. “You are a trusty fellow and I hold you in high favour.”

“And I belong to my master Hassan,” said the cat, “and I ask nothing better than that I should belong to him through all the rest of my nine lives.”

“Good puss!” said Oberon. “It shall be as you wish. Remain in my dominions for as long as you please and you have only to utter a desire for it to be satisfied.”

“Oh!” said the little girl. “Let us begin to see the world at once.”

In the twinkling of an eye they were off. They met the North Wind, the South Wind, the East Wind and the West Wind, visited all their palaces and dined with them in state. They flew to Egypt and found a gilded barge waiting to take them up the Nile, they slept in a palace beside the Pyramids, and visited a temple in the heart of the desert where dwelt the last of the Sacred Cats. They flew across the ocean to the islands where the water fairies dwell, where the trees are all pink coral and the stones of the beach are all pearls. They travelled over the mountains on nimble-footed horses and saw the four kingdoms of the dwarfs which none but the fairies had ever seen before. They went to the very bottom of the sea without wetting so much as the hair of their heads and saw the wonderful treasures scattered upon the floor of the ocean. They went to the icy North and rode upon polar bears, and they went to the country where the sun never sets and feasted upon ice cream and raspberry tarts. And at last they returned to the palace of King Oberon, having seen nearly

everything there was to see, and the tailor said, "O daughter of the Sultan, if you have any wish left ungratified, ask it now, for I am a plain man, and I long to return to Constantinople where I have a piece of business I had forgotten to finish."

"Yes," said the little girl. "I should like to grow up, have a husband and live happily ever after."

Instantly she grew up into the most beautiful maiden that ever was seen, and at the same moment a fairy announced that the prince who was to be her husband had arrived with a magnificent cavalcade and was waiting to put the ring on her finger. So the tailor gave the bride away, the cat held her train and King Oberon presented her with a kingdom for her dowry. Then the prince and the Sultan's daughter rode away to the land where they were to be happy ever after, and the tailor and his cat went to bed.

### *Sixth Day: The Queen's Wedding Dress*

When the tailor woke next morning he was in his own house in Constantinople and his servant was brushing his clothes. "What day of the

month is this?" said the tailor, and the servant replied, "The fourteenth, master."

"Well," thought the tailor to himself, "I don't know what to think, so I shall say nothing about it. But I am a plain man and when I undertake to do a thing I like to keep my promise. So I hope nothing will occur today to hinder me from finishing the Grand Vizier's breeches." So he stitched away busily all the rest of the day, never taking his eyes from his work until it was finished, and in the evening he made the breeches into a neat parcel and took them down to the Grand Vizier's palace himself.

As he was returning through the streets with his cat who had accompanied him, a stranger stepped up to him and said: "Pray, sir, are you Hassan the tailor? Because if you are, I am to beg you to come with me on board my ship where you will find some very profitable business awaiting you."

The tailor accompanied the stranger without more ado to the quayside, where he found a stately ship moored and in the cabin an elderly merchant who was awaiting him with great anxiety.

“Honoured sir,” said the merchant, “I have heard of your skill and entreat your help. Some little time ago I was on a voyage to foreign parts to purchase fine silks and cloth of gold, when my ship was blown right out of her course and I found myself among the Enchanted Isles. I landed on one of the islands which was inhabited by fairy spinners and weavers and they sold me a bale of the most wonderful stuff in the whole world; it gleams like the rainbow and sparkles with gold thread and moreover is softer and lighter than thistledown. I sold a piece to the Queen of the Great Valley for her wedding dress, but none of her people can cut it out and make it up. As soon as they touch it with the scissors it all falls into little bits and blows away. I have given her more stuff and again more, and at last I have only a little piece left, just enough for a gown and none to spare. The queen vows she will be married in that or not at all, and if the gown is not soon made my life shall pay for it; so I begged permission to obtain the services of the most skilful tailor I could find and meanwhile the queen holds my son as a hostage. What say you, sir? Will you help me?”

“Willingly, if I can,” said the tailor, “but this seems a troublesome business. What say you, cat?”

“Let us go,” said the cat. “These are the Fortunate Days and this poor merchant may as well share our good luck.” So it was agreed, and the ship was soon sailing down the Bosphorus and out into the open sea. In a few days they arrived at the mouth of a mighty river and made their way upstream until they found themselves entering the Kingdom of the Great Valley. It was a beautiful country and the queen’s city was built of white marble and looked fit for King Oberon and Queen Mab to hold their court there. The ship was quickly moored and the merchant made haste to enter the city and embrace his son; then he presented Hassan to the queen, who commanded that they should be supplied with all they required, promising them that if they spoiled the dress their heads should fall.

When they were alone the tailor said: “I do not like this lady, and it would serve her right if she were never married at all. However, I will do what I can for you. Go into the city and buy perfectly new scissors and tomorrow we will see

what can be done." So new scissors of the finest quality were fetched and the tailor carried them into his chamber with all that remained of the precious stuff and locked himself in with his cat to keep guard. That night neither the tailor nor his cat slept a wink and just as day dawned they were astonished to see the scissors rise and stand on end, then gaily dance all round the room, after which they lay down again.

"The scissors are bewitched and will spoil everything they touch," said Hassan. "Let fresh scissors be brought." So more were fetched and the next night the same thing happened. The third day the tailor bought the scissors himself, carried them home without anyone else touching them, locked them in a casket and laid them at the bottom of a bowl of water. "Now we shall see what we shall see," he said, as he prepared for rest. In the middle of the night he heard a little voice saying: "Cat, cat, drink up the water. Cat, cat, drink up the water." And sitting up in bed he saw a fairy perched on the edge of the bowl, and trying to put a spell on the scissors; only the water prevented her. "Cat, cat," she said

again, “drink up the water or I will turn you into a mouse.”

“I assure you, lady,” said the tailor, “that you cannot touch my cat, which is under the special protection of King Oberon. But if you will tell me why you wish to bewitch my scissors, perhaps I may be able to serve you.”

Then said the fairy: “Bold man, you intend to make a wedding dress out of the fairy stuff for a haughty woman who has presumed to speak disrespectfully of the Queen of the Fairies herself, wherefore Queen Mab has commanded that she shall never wear the dress. Moreover, this proud queen is not the rightful ruler of the land. The royal nurse stole the true queen away when she was a baby and put her own child in the cradle, so the present ruler is an impostor and the true queen is one of her waiting-maids.”

Then said Hassan: “Let us make a bargain. If you will allow me to make this dress, none but the true queen shall wear it; and moreover, I swear by my sword that I will turn this false queen off the throne.”

Then said the fairy, “I agree, but woe betide you if you fail.”



*“The cat was making friends with the waiting-maids.”*



So the next morning Hassan carefully dried and polished his scissors, cut up the stuff and was soon stitching away for dear life. Meanwhile the cat was making friends with the waiting-maids and he soon told his master he was sure he had discovered the true queen, who was as fair as the day and of the sweetest disposition imaginable; moreover, she was supposed by all to be the daughter of the queen's old nurse.

Thereupon the tailor at once sought the queen and begged for the services of this waiting-maid, which was granted. So the tailor fitted the dress upon the young girl, and she looked so beautiful in the fairy stuff that he could hardly restrain himself from falling on his knees and crying, "Hail to your Majesty!" However, he bade her say nothing and on the eve of the wedding he obtained permission for her to watch the wedding dress all night with his cat for company, while he himself kept guard before the door with his drawn sword.

In the morning the cat told the girl to ask no questions but array herself in the gown, which she did. Soon messengers arrived bidding the tailor bring the gown to the queen's chamber, but

he sent them away with the message, “The queen is already dressed.” Then he gave the young girl his hand and led her down to the great hall of the palace where all the nobles of the land were awaiting their mistress.

“Most noble lords,” said the tailor, “I present to you your true queen, who was stolen from her cradle in her infancy by her nurse who brought her up as her own child. And if any man doubts it, let the nurse be fetched.”

So the old nurse was fetched and would have denied it, but as she opened her lips a murmur arose like the humming of a thousand bees: “This is the true queen! This is the true queen!” And lo and behold! it was the gold threads in the wedding dress all speaking together and the sound was like the sound of harp strings. Then the old nurse was terrified and confessed her fraud; so she and her daughter were bundled out of the kingdom, for nobody liked them.

As for the prince who was to have married the false queen, he went back to his own land in disgust, and a month later the true queen was wedded to a brave knight of great renown who had loved her while she was only a waiting-maid.

So there was much rejoicing and the cat and his master were loaded with honours; the queen gave the tailor a magnificent sword and the grateful merchant insisted on escorting him back to his own land and would have given him his ship if he would have accepted it. So they sailed away from the Kingdom of the Great Valley laden with presents and reached Constantinople one evening just at sunset. Then the tailor took an affectionate leave of the merchant and he and his cat went home and straight to bed.

### *Seventh Day: The Sword of Honour*

Next morning the tailor was awakened by his servant, who brought him his coffee and said, “There is a stranger below waiting to speak with you, sir.”

“Already?” said the tailor. “Why, what day of the month in this?”

“The fifteenth, master,” said the servant, as he placed the tailor’s clothes ready to put on. “What a magnificent sword you have purchased, sir,” he added.

“I did not buy it,” said the tailor. “It was a gift.” Then he dressed hastily, said his prayers,

and went to greet his visitor. He found an elderly gentleman seated on his best divan stroking the cat, who was purring loudly but saying nothing. The tailor and the stranger saluted each other with profound salaams, and the tailor offered his guest a box of Turkish Delight. Then said the stranger: "O Hassan, I have heard that in your youth you were a man of valour and that in your old age you have become a man of wealth and discretion. I require just such a person as you to undertake a mission of great importance and secrecy. Say, will you accept it?"

"I am a plain man," said the tailor, "but I try to give satisfaction. What do you wish me to do?"

Then said the stranger: "I am the trusted councillor of the King of the Joyous Lands and save the king himself no one is of more importance than I. My good fortune is entirely owing to a wonderful talisman given me in my youth by an old woman who lives among the mountains of the north, and she has sent word to me that as I cannot possibly advance to greater honour than I already hold I am to return her talisman by a trusty hand, in order that she may

bestow it upon the first person who shows himself worthy of her favour. What say you? Will you be my messenger?"

"Right willingly," said the tailor. "I will start at once." So the stranger opened his robe and drew forth the talisman which he hung round the tailor's neck, then he gave him a bag of gold for his needs, directed him how to find the old woman and bade him good speed. So the tailor disguised himself as a mendicant, concealed the gold in his turban and hid the sword the Queen of the Great Valley had given him in the folds of his ragged dress. The cat jumped on his shoulder and the two set out at once.

Their way led them northeast for many days and at length they reached a great pine forest and lay down under the trees to sleep. When they awoke next morning they were astounded to see a number of wild-looking men squatting round them and gazing with great veneration at the tailor's sword which lay beside him, clasped in his right hand. As soon as they saw the tailor was awake they hastily brought bread and honey and bowls of milk, and a special saucer of cream for the cat.

“Who are you, good people?” said the tailor.

“O noble wearer of the Honourable Sword,” said one of the men, “we are the people of the Desolate Plain and our lot is hard. However, we have good hope that now we have met with you our luck will mend.”

“How so?” said the tailor.

“The worst of our misfortunes is that we have lost our chieftain, who was wont to lead us against our enemies in war, and in peace was a mighty hunter and showed us how to provide for our wants. But he was decoyed away by a sorceress and chained to a rock with manacles which no file can sever.”

“How then can I serve you?” asked the tailor.

“Your sword, most noble sir, is a magical weapon,” answered the man. “It was forged by the northern elves and bears their marks on the hilt; moreover, it has power over all things.”

“Then,” said the tailor, “let us not lose an instant but lead me to your chieftain forthwith.”

Straightway the men arose and placing Hassan and his cat in their midst began to run northward. Oh, how they ran! The tailor nearly dropped with fatigue, nevertheless he struggled

on valiantly, his drawn sword in his hand, and at nightfall they reached the rock to which the chieftain was fettered. The heavy manacles round his wrist gleamed with a strange light which was the result of the enchantment placed on them by the sorceress, and the poor prisoner was so wasted away that he looked ready to die.

“Ha!” said Hassan. “Here is a pretty business.” So saying, he smote the manacles on the chieftain’s right wrist and the links were instantly severed. But what was his consternation when the metal immediately joined together again and the links glittered wickedly as though they had never been touched!

Then Hassan smote the manacles on the prisoner’s left hand, and the same thing happened; whereupon the onlookers gnashed their teeth and wrung their hands in despair. Then said the cat softly, “Master, hang the talisman about his neck and try *both* manacles at once.” So the tailor hung the talisman round the chieftain’s neck and bidding him stand well away from the rock to which he was chained and stretch his arms behind him, he brought down his sword with a tremendous blow across both

manacles at once, and lo! the links flew into a thousand pieces and the chieftain was a free man once more.

“Now, what will you do?” asked Hassan when all had poured out their thanks.

“Go after that miserable sorceress,” said the chieftain, “and destroy her so that she may work no more mischief.”

“Well said,” answered Hassan; “I would I could come with you, but I have an errand to perform. However, I will give you my sword, which is an honourable weapon and worthy of a great chieftain; and let us each go our way and when we have accomplished our work we will meet here again and feast together like brothers.”

“With all my heart,” said the chieftain, girding the sword upon him, and restoring the talisman to Hassan. So they parted with mutual esteem and Hassan and the cat made haste to find the old woman in the mountains. They reached her house late one snowy evening and she took them inside the mountain and entertained them most hospitably. The old woman greatly admired the cat and even offered to give the tailor the famous talisman if he would leave

his cat behind, but he replied, "Not for a thousand talismans!" Whereupon the old woman laughed and they spent the evening very cosily telling each other tales. The next few days they passed examining the treasures in the mountain, then the old woman told the tailor it was time to depart, as his friend the chieftain would be expecting him. "But before you go I have a gift for you," she said. Thereupon she gave him a smart pair of shoes made of crimson leather and lined with fur. "These will make the ground fly under your feet," she said, then she bade him good speed and the tailor and his cat set off. What wonderful shoes those were! The tailor's feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground and in an incredibly short time he was back at the spot where he had parted from the chieftain. He found his friend and all his followers eagerly expecting him and a great feast prepared. They dined on reindeer steak and wild duck prepared in a most appetising manner and drank each other's health and sang songs and told tales. The chieftain related how he had slain the sorceress with the sword of honour and Hassan recounted some of his adventures with his cat. When they

were all so tired that they could not keep their eyes open another second, they rolled themselves up in their cloaks and fell asleep by the camp-fire.

When the tailor awoke next morning he was in his own room at Constantinople and his servant was diligently polishing the new red boots.

*Eighth Day: The Prince of the Desert*

“Good morning, sir,” said the tailor’s servant when he saw his master was awake. “This is the sixteenth day of the month. May your shadow never grow less!”

The tailor at once rose and dressed, putting on the new red boots, and then asked for his cat. At that moment the cat sprang in at the window and they made a good breakfast together. When the meal was ended the tailor said: “Cat, let us have a serious talk. I am a plain man and I declare I do not know if I am on my head or my heels. In seven days I have taken long and hazardous journeys to Persia, China, the Moon, the Kingdom of the Great Valley, the bowels of the earth, the mountains of the north, the very

heart of Fairyland, the bottom of the sea and the greater part of the inhabited world and have had enough adventures to satisfy seven men for all their lives. This is your doing and I consider it is time you settled down and gave up gadding about."

"Master," said the cat, "I told you I had nine lives. There are but two left; when we come to the last it will be time to think of settling down and to decide where we will spend it. For the present let us take advantage of the Fortunate Days and enjoy good luck wherever we find it."

"So be it," said the tailor, "and while the day is cool let us stroll through the city and hear the news." So they set off together and made their way toward the bazaars where one can always hear the latest intelligence. But as they were going along the tailor was seized with a most unaccountable tingling of the soles of his feet which made him start running at such a rate that even the cat could not keep up with him. "Master, master," cried the cat, "take me too." The tailor paused an instant to pick up his cat then ran on again as though possessed. Soon to his horror he found himself approaching the

Bosphorus and as it was quite impossible to stop he expected as soon as he reached the quayside that he would fall into the water and be drowned. "Jump, cat, while there is time," he cried, but the cat answered, "No, master, I stay with you. Fear nothing." And at that very moment they came to the edge of the quay and instead of falling into the water as he expected, the tailor found himself running through the air with incredible swiftness and before he could cry "Snip!" he landed safe and sound in Asia Minor. Even there he could not stop, but continued running with all his might; before evening he had run right across Asia Minor and left it behind, he had passed Damascus and was heading straight for the deserts of Arabia. When the moon began to rise they reached an ancient temple in the very heart of the desert and there the tailor at last was able to stop. He and the cat at once entered the temple and lay down to rest; before he fell asleep, however, the tailor removed his boots. "For," said he, "I do not want to begin running again before sunrise."

In the very middle of the night, however, he heard someone calling, "Tailor, tailor, help me

or I perish." He at once sprang up and began to search the temple and presently he found a tall pillar of white marble standing all by itself in a little courtyard which was open to the sky. On top of the pillar was the statue of a veiled princess, all of marble which shone in the moonlight. On the statue's forehead hung a single pearl and as the tailor gazed at it the statue spoke again. "Tailor, tailor," it said, "take the jewel from my forehead and show it to the Prince of the Desert and bid him rescue me! This one night of the year am I allowed to speak; when the sun rises again I shall be dumb and lifeless." Quick as lightning the tailor made up his mind. "Up, cat," said he, "fetch me the jewel while I put on my boots." The cat did not need twice telling, but took an immense spring and was halfway up the column in a jiffy; then it stuck out all its claws and scratched and crawled its way to the top, leaped upon the princess's shoulder and bit off the pearl which was hanging on her forehead. By the time the tailor had put on his boots the cat had reached the ground again with the jewel in its mouth. "Which way must I go, lady?" asked the tailor. "South," replied

the statue, "south to the City of Forty Wells." "Farewell, then!" said the tailor, and without stopping for so much as a bite or a sup, ran out of the temple and hastened due south. He ran and ran and ran, the cat sitting on his shoulder still holding the pearl in its mouth. They passed caravans of merchants in the desert and cities half buried in sand and solitary wells surrounded by a few palm trees and many encampments of wandering Arabs. Once they were chased by a band of armed horsemen, but the tailor easily outdistanced them, and by the end of the day he reached the City of Forty Wells and demanded to see the Prince of the Desert. However the people were not willing to admit him. "What!" said they. "Do you think any dusty vagabond who pleases can speak to the prince?"

"Very well," said the tailor. "Then I shall run round your city until he himself comes to speak to me." Thereupon he began to run again, round and round the walls till the people grew terrified, and some said he was a madman and would destroy himself and bring disgrace upon the city, and others said he was a magician who was

putting a spell upon them. Thereupon they all with one accord sought out their prince as they should have done at the beginning and laid all before him. As soon as the prince heard what was happening he left his palace, and hastened out of the city and placed himself directly in the tailor's path. "I am the Prince of the Desert," he said, "and I would have speech with you."

"Most mighty sir," said the tailor, "behold this pearl. The noble lady who wore it bids you go to her rescue."

"O honourable man!" said the prince. "How can I ever atone for the way my people treated you? The lady who wore this jewel was to have been my wife and she was spirited away by an evil genie on the eve of her wedding day and I have searched the world for her in vain." Then the tailor told him about the temple in the desert and how the princess was turned to stone.

"Alas!" cried the prince. "There is but one creature in the world who could change her back to flesh and blood, and that is this very genie who changed her into a statue."

Then said the cat, "Where does this creature dwell?" Thereupon the prince told them that the

genie always appeared in the form of a beautiful woman and she lived in a solitary palace on the shores of the sea. "Come then, master," said the cat. "We will seek this genie and if I cannot learn how to restore the princess to life I am not worthy of my nine lives."

Without wasting a single word the tailor picked up his cat and started to run across the desert so swiftly that in a few seconds they were out of sight and the Prince of the Desert was disposed to think he had been dreaming. However, the tailor ran to such good purpose that before evening he came in sight of the palace of the genie, whereupon he concealed himself among the sandhills while the cat went on to the palace alone. The genie was sitting upon a pile of silken cushions admiring herself in a mirror when the cat entered and politely wished her "Good evening." "Where did you learn to talk, cat?" said the genie, and she was so pleased with him that she bade him sit beside her and caressed him most fondly. Then the cat told her all about his travels and how he had visited the heart of Fairyland, and even been to the bottom of the sea, and the genie praised his beauty and his

wisdom till he purred aloud with satisfaction. When they had talked some time very contentedly the cat said, "Doubtless you also are very learned and can do many wonderful things?"

"I can indeed," said the genie. "I can assume any shape it pleases me and I understand the transmutation of metals."

"Can you soften a heart of stone and turn it into flesh and blood?" asked the cat.

"Nothing is easier," said the genie. "Here is the amulet in which the power resides and you may have it to play with." Thereupon she took the amulet from her neck and hung the chain to which it was fastened round the cat's shoulders. The cat had a fine game with its new toy and frisked and frolicked about the room until the genie ached with laughing; then the cat settled down on a cushion and pretended to fall asleep, and the genie, saying she would be back in a couple of days, set out on a journey to the other side of the world to visit a friend and boast about her new cat. As soon as she was gone the cat sprang out of the window and rejoined his master, who immediately started to run with

all his might. Before next morning they again reached the City of the Forty Wells and found the Prince of the Desert, who embraced the tailor like his brother.

“Stay for nothing!” cried the tailor. “Take my boots and this amulet and rescue your bride before the genie discovers her loss. I will follow with your retinue and a litter for the princess as fast as the camels can travel.” The prince thanked him profoundly and was soon travelling northward to the ancient temple as fast as the magical boots could carry him. He had a coil of rope on his shoulder and a little food in a wallet and nothing else but his trusty sword. He soon arrived at the temple and throwing his rope so that it caught in the marble flowers sculptured round the top of the pillar on which the princess was standing, he speedily clambered to the top and hung the amulet round the princess’s neck. Then to his joy he saw her slowly change into flesh and blood, and at last she drew a deep breath and cried: “I am saved. Thank you, dear prince.”

He was just about to help her most carefully down to the ground when he heard a screech of

rage and saw the evil genie standing below. She had discovered the loss of the amulet and had come as straight as an arrow to the place where it was. "Come down and be destroyed," she cried, and instantly assumed the shape of a lion. The prince did not wait a second, but dropped to the ground and rushed upon the lion with his sword. Then began a fight which lasted for three days: the prince and the lion fought with the utmost fury and at last the prince wounded the beast, whereupon it turned into a dragon. The prince chopped off one of its paws and nearly cut off its head, whereupon it turned into a wolf; and so it went on, the genie constantly assuming new shapes, and at last the prince grew very weary and his arm more and more feeble, and it looked as if the genie really would win after all, when in the very nick of time the tailor arrived with the prince's retinue and rushed to the rescue. Slick! slash! went the tailor's sword and the genie fell dead on the ground. Then they burnt the ugly body to make sure it should never do any more mischief, and the prince and the princess were wedded there and then. The tailor and the cat sat in the place of honour at the

wedding feast and when night came on they retired to a magnificent tent of silken curtains which the prince had given them, and stretching themselves on their rugs fell fast asleep.

### *Ninth Day: The Garden of Felicity*

When the tailor awoke next morning he found himself sitting in his own garden in Constantinople. The servant came out of the house and said, "This is the seventeenth morning of the month and a day of good omen. Will you be pleased to breakfast out here?"

The tailor bade him bring coffee and bread and the servant went into the house again. At that moment the cat began to purr loudly, and looking round, the tailor saw that a stranger had entered the garden and was stroking the cat, who greeted him like an old friend. The stranger was dressed like a travelling minstrel and at his girdle hung two silver keys; when he smiled his face was creased with a thousand wrinkles and when he spoke his language was so exalted that the tailor could hardly understand him. The tailor could not make up his mind whether he

was young or old, or whether he was very wise or a little mad.

“Friend Hassan,” said the stranger, “you have been up and down the world, but there is still a portion of my dominions which you have not entered. Be pleased to come with me and you will understand me better.”

Thereupon he took one of the keys from his girdle and fitted it in the lock of a silver door which suddenly grew up before him out of nowhere. He motioned to the tailor and his cat to pass through and when they obeyed they found themselves standing in a valley more beautiful than anything they had ever dreamed of, and the city of Constantinople nowhere to be seen. The stranger stepped after them and carefully locked the gate, which immediately vanished, while he himself was transformed into a most handsome prince.

“Friend Hassan,” said the Prince of the Dreams (for it was he), “this is my Secret Kingdom where I make welcome all who win my favour, and where if you please you may live happily ever after. Here is a gentleman who wishes to make your acquaintance and who will

show you everything you wish to see.” Thereupon he presented Hassan to a most noble looking man who was standing near at hand and left them together.

“I am the Emperor Saladin,” said the tailor’s new acquaintance, “and I am most happy to see you here. Let us enter this garden close at hand and perhaps you will be so good as to tell me the conclusion of your adventures with the Prince of the Desert.”

So they entered the garden and sat down upon a bench under some trees while the tailor narrated the fortunate termination of the fight with the genie and gave an account of the wedding.

“You are a man after my own heart,” said Saladin. “It is not everyone who has slain a wicked genie. I am, as you know, of considerable valour. I have fought with Richard Cœur de Lion and am held in esteem by all the champions of Christendom, but even I have never had such adventures as have befallen you.”

“It was nothing,” said the tailor. “I am a plain man and have always tried to do my best. But

now I shall be heartily glad to settle down and rest awhile."

"Then you may do so here," said Saladin, "for this is the Garden of Felicity and those who come here are the most fortunate beings in the world."

At that moment the cat sprang upon the tailor's knee. "Master!" he cried. "This is the place for me. I have just met two most distinguished cats; one tells me he is the trusted friend and servant of the famous knight, Sir Richard Whittington, and the other is no less than the renowned Puss in Boots. They are waiting to conduct me all over this wonderful country; say, are you content to dwell here?"

"With all my heart!" cried the tailor. "Let us remain in this beautiful kingdom." And so it was agreed and there they are to this day.

\*       \*       \*       \*

Meanwhile the Grand Vizier of Constantinople had been hearing how people said that Hassan the tailor was getting on in the world, and wearing fine clothes and rings on his fingers every day and had even acquired a handsome

new sword. So the Vizier said: "This fellow is getting too big in his own estimation. I will have him strangled and thrown into the Bosphorus." Thereupon he sent for the executioners and bade them proceed to the tailor's house. They arrived just as the servant was carrying the breakfast into the garden and they bade him at once conduct them to his master. When they entered the garden they saw what they supposed to be the tailor sitting cross-legged on a pile of cushions, but when they drew near it was nothing but a suit of old clothes with a turban on top.

Then said the executioners: "What shall we do? If we let it be known that he has escaped, our lives will pay the forfeit." So they tied the clothes into a bundle, put them in a sack with a heavy stone and threw them in the Bosphorus. Then they returned to the Grand Vizier and said, "The tailor is no more."

And so said everybody. But you and I know better.

## *The Enchanted Isle*

*THIS is the Island that all men seek  
But few have ever found;  
This is the magical, golden beach  
And this is enchanted ground.*

*Here is the pool where the fairies bathe  
And yonder they dance on the grass;  
And while an invisible harper plays  
A mortal's whole life might pass.*

*And he might dwell in the magical isle  
And hearken the fairy laughter,  
And if he were lucky, might join in the dance  
And live happily ever after.*

# The Golden Horseshoe

**O**NCE upon a time a pedlar was walking along the road to market when he all but trod upon something bright and shining lying in his way, and stooping down he found it was a little horseshoe made of the finest gold.

“Here’s a pretty thing and a very pretty thing!” he said, and putting it in his pack thought no more about it until he reached the town and began to display his wares in the market place. There it rolled out of the pack with the ribbons and laces and at once attracted great attention. Everybody wished to know where he had got it and when he told how he had found it lying on the highway people began to ask what person of distinction had recently passed through the town, and whether anyone had noticed a traveller whose horse was shod with gold. And soon there was such a commotion that the Chief

Magistrate sent to enquire about it, so the pedlar and his pack were taken to the Town Hall and he was made to tell his story all over again.

“I do not believe a word of it,” said the Chief Magistrate. “If any great personage had passed through the town I should have been warned beforehand so that I might have the bells rung and prepare a handsome speech.” As he said this he puffed himself up and looked very haughty. “More than that, this is no ordinary horseshoe; it is too small for the smallest pony that was ever seen. It is my belief that it is somebody’s lucky charm and you have stolen it. You will go to prison until you confess the truth.”

In vain the unfortunate pedlar protested that he was an honest man; he was haled off to prison and locked up with a jug of water and a loaf of bread and left to his own reflections. And presently night came on, and as he sat in the pitch dark two tears rolled down his cheeks as he thought of his hopeless case.

“Whatever shall I do,” he said, “if they never let me out? I shall stay here until I am quite an old man and one day I shall die and be buried in the prison yard.”

And just as he said this he saw a light shining through the keyhole and presently the door was unlocked and the gaoler's daughter appeared with a lantern in one hand and his pack in the other.

"Do not speak a word," she whispered, "but muffle yourself up in your cloak and follow me."

The pedlar did as she bade him and without another word she led him up a flight of steps, down a long passage and unlocked another door. Quite dumbfounded, the pedlar stepped out into the street and found himself a free man.

"Here are your pack and your horseshoe," said the girl. "Now I should advise you to get out of this town as quickly as you can while everyone is fast asleep in bed."

The pedlar did not wait to be told twice. Hastily thanking his rescuer, he took to his heels and ran for his life, nor did he rest until he found himself once more upon the highway near the spot where he had found the golden horseshoe.

"Unlucky thing!" he cried, "I will be rid of you. Here goes!" And with that he threw it from him with all his might and it fell in the roadway far behind him with a little tinkling sound and



*“Without another word she led him up a flight  
of steps.”*



rolled into the ditch. Then he made off and was never seen in those parts again.

Now it happened that another wayfarer had been passing along that road when night fell, and being still far from the town had rolled himself in his old cloak and lain down in the ditch, which was dry and full of old leaves and soft fern. "I shall do famously here," he said, and was soon fast asleep. In the morning he was awakened by something cold resting against his cheek, and lo and behold! it was a little golden horseshoe.

"Here's a pretty thing and a very pretty thing," he said. "Now I wonder who is the owner of this pretty thing." While he was speaking he was turning it over in his hand and noticing how beautifully it was made and how wonderfully small.

"Some great personage must have driven past in the night and now is probably having great trouble to get a new shoe for the horse, for I doubt if the blacksmiths about here are accustomed to make things like this. Perhaps it is some fairy princess. I will hurry after her and restore the shoe, and who knows, she may give me a piece

of silver for my trouble.” Saying this, the traveller scrambled out of the ditch and set off towards the town. He was quite a young man and was seeking his fortune; also he was very strong and brave and handsome, and so long as his old father and mother were pleased with him, he did not care a button for anybody.

When he reached the town he found everything in an uproar. The escape of the pedlar had been discovered and the Chief Magistrate was very angry and declared he would make an example of the gaoler and his daughter. Everybody was talking at the top of his voice and nobody was attending to business, and the young man had the greatest difficulty in inducing the blacksmith to pay the slightest attention to him. At last he managed to ask him whether any great personage had visited him desiring to have his horse shod, and showed him the horseshoe.

“Upon my life!” shouted the blacksmith; “here is another of them. Come, you rascal, there is a rod in pickle for you and you shall not escape so easily as your brother.”

So saying, the blacksmith flung himself upon the young man and with the help of the by-

standers bore him, struggling furiously, to the Town Hall, where the Chief Magistrate was just condemning the gaoler and his daughter to be shut up in prison for the rest of their lives.

“What is all this uproar?” said the Chief Magistrate angrily.

“If it please your worship,” said the blacksmith, “here is another of these rascals with a golden horseshoe. Depend upon it, they are a band of robbers who have waylaid some wealthy traveller and taken the very shoes off the horses’ feet.”

“Silence, fellow!” commanded the Magistrate. “Have I not said that no horse could wear so small a shoe? Hold your tongue while I examine the prisoner. Now, rascal,” said the magistrate, “what have you to say for yourself?”

“I am not a rascal,” said the young man. “I found the shoe lying by the roadside and came to restore it to the owner. But it seems that all the people in this town are mad. I wish I were a thousand miles away.”

The very instant he said these words, he shot violently from the ground, right through the ceiling and was carried swiftly through the air

he knew not whither. A few seconds later he found himself in the middle of an immense desert; as far as the eye could see was golden sand and it was very hot, but near by were a few palm trees and a well, and a caravan of merchants were loading up their camels with bales of merchandise ready for a long journey across the desert. The young man approached the eldest merchant, who immediately prostrated himself.

“What is your will, my lord?” said the merchant.

“What is the name of this place?” asked the young man.

“This is the Sahara, my lord,” answered the merchant.

“Can you give me something to drink?” said the young man, for he was very thirsty after his journey through the air. The merchant at once arose and brought a cup of gold encrusted with jewels which he filled with wine from a leather bottle; then he brought dried grapes and figs and some little cakes and begged the young man to make a good meal. “And as for the cup,” he said, “I beg your lordship to accept it, though it is unworthy of so mighty a magician.”

"I can never be sufficiently obliged to you," said the young man as he put the cup in his wallet. "But now I must take leave of you, for I must try to do something for that unfortunate gaoler and his daughter who seem to be the only sane people in the town. I wish myself back where I came from."

As he spoke he found himself once more carried swiftly through the air and a few seconds later he was back again in the Town Hall, rather out of breath but still grasping the golden horseshoe. The townspeople were still talking at the top of their voices and had not troubled to remove the gaoler and his daughter, who were standing in the middle of the court with fetters on their wrists and tears running down their cheeks.

"One at a time is as much as I can manage," said the young man as he felled the blacksmith with a well-directed blow. The others were too amazed at his sudden reappearance to oppose him and he seized the girl in his arms and said, "I wish myself twenty miles back on the road." Immediately they were both carried through the ceiling and through the air with incredible swift-

ness and a second later found themselves twenty miles from the town on the same high road that the young man had passed along the evening before. He quickly hid the girl in a little wood close by and wished himself back in the Town Hall; there he seized hold of the old father, wished himself back in the wood and in a trice they were there with the gaoler's daughter, all very much out of breath but not a little pleased at such a fortunate turn of affairs.

"But, dear me!" said the young man, "you cannot go about with fetters on your wrists; you will be taken for escaped felons. I have it! Those who make trouble must expect trouble. Wait here for me and I will fetch the blacksmith."

No sooner said than done. The young man wished himself at the blacksmith's forge in the town and he reached it at the very moment the blacksmith was sitting down to dinner. There was a beautiful pie on the table and a crusty loaf and many good things to eat.

"I must trouble you to bring half a loaf and a file with you," said the young man, "or I shall be obliged to knock you down again." And the blacksmith having put his file and the bread in

his wallet the young man seized him by the collar and cried: "Off we go. I wish myself back in the wood."

So the blacksmith was whirled away through the air and landed with a bump in the wood. There he was set to work to file the fetters from the prisoners' wrists while the young man fed them with pieces of bread and a few dates he had saved from his short visit to the desert; and when both the gaoler and his daughter were free, the young man carried the blacksmith back to the town the same way he had brought him. "It would have served you right to have had to walk home," he said, "but I am beholden to you for half a loaf of bread so I have done this much for you." Then he wished himself back in the wood.

There he bade farewell to the gaoler and his daughter and recommended them to go their ways into the world with all speed and not linger near the town lest they be retaken. "For myself," he said, "I have still to find the rightful owners of the golden horseshoe and restore it to them." So they thanked him and went their way down the high road, and after a while they overtook

the pedlar who had been the first to find the horseshoe and told him what had happened. Then he was sorry he had thrown away his luck, but it was now too late to do anything, so they all trudged on together. And when they reached the pedlar's country he asked the girl to marry him and she consented, so they settled down very comfortably and opened a shop where they sold gingerbread and candy.

Meanwhile the young man had turned back toward the town where his adventures began, and when he reached the spot where he had slept the night before, he entered the woods by the side of the road and searched very carefully. "For," said he, "none of those mad people seemed to have heard of any traveller whose horse had cast a golden shoe. It may be the owner has taken refuge in the woods while she considers what to do." For he was quite sure in his own mind that the owner was a fairy princess. However, he found nothing, though he searched till it was dark and the moon came out; at last he had to give up and sat down in a little glade to make his supper of the remains of the loaf and a few berries. All at once he heard a jingle of

little bells and starting to his feet he saw a beautiful little milk-white horse with bells on its bridle cantering down the glade. It had a long tail and a silky mane and it shone in the moonlight like silver, but most wonderful of all, it had two white wings growing from its shoulders.

“You beautiful creature,” said the young man, “come here and let me see if you have lost a shoe.” At first it would not allow the young man to approach and he greatly feared it would spread its wings and disappear from his sight, but after a while it allowed itself to be coaxed, and the young man patted and fondled it and soon saw that one of its little golden shoes was missing.

“Where is your mistress, you pretty creature?” said the young man, but it could not reply and only dropped its muzzle into his hand and stood quite quietly. “Well, I am going to get you shod,” said the young man. “That is the first thing to be done.” So he tied the little horse up by its bridle and wished himself at the blacksmith’s in the town once more. The blacksmith was in bed but the young man soon had him up and dressed and bade him get his tools, for he

had found the horse that wore the golden horse-shoe.

“That is all very well,” grumbled the blacksmith. “But a golden shoe means golden nails and where do you suppose I am to find golden nails at this time of night?”

“You can come and see the horse,” said the young man, seizing the blacksmith by the collar, “and then you can come back and make the nails.”

So off they flew to the glade in the wood where the little horse was waiting for them. As the young man patted it, it threw up its head and all the little bells on its bridle rang merrily. “This is a strange kind of horse,” said the blacksmith, “and you are a strange young man.” However, he took a good look at the horse’s hoof and calculated how large to make the nails, then they flew back to the forge. While the blacksmith was blowing up the fire the young man took the merchant’s cup from his pocket and picked the jewels from their sockets with the point of his knife; then he gave the cup to the blacksmith and bade him make the nails of that. So the blacksmith hammered and filed and hammered and

filed and soon had seven golden nails ready. Then they flew back to the woods again and by morning the wonderful horse was properly shod once more.

“This time I am afraid you will really have to walk back to the town,” said the young man, “as I cannot even spare the time to fly there with you and back again. However, here is a little diamond for your trouble and I will not fetch you out of bed again.” So the blacksmith trudged back to the town and the young man considered what he should do now he could no longer take the horseshoe in his hand and just wish himself wherever he pleased.

He thought a long time without coming to any conclusion; at last it occurred to him that the wonderful horse could find its way home to its own stable and there he would learn who was its rightful owner and gain some idea of what was best to be done. “Do you think you could bear me on your back, you beautiful creature?” he said. “You are small, but you look strong and I am sure you have wonderful powers. Let us try.” So he led the horse out on to the highway and got carefully into the saddle, and it really was

extraordinary, but when he thrust his foot into the stirrup he did not feel a bit too big for his steed but, on the contrary, horse and rider were as comfortable as though made for one another.

“Now,” said the young man, giving the bridle a little shake so that all the bells rang, “find your way home. Trot!”

The white horse obediently trotted a few steps, then suddenly it unfurled its wings with a whirring sound and rose swiftly in the air. High up flew the young man and his fairy steed, among the clouds and over the mountains, not as when he made his visit to the desert, but so that he could see the countries he was passing over. However, he feared to look down lest he should turn giddy and at last he laid his head down on the horse’s mane and went fast asleep. When he awoke they had returned to earth again and were just riding in at the gates of a mighty palace. Soldiers presented arms, heralds sounded their trumpets, servants ran out of the palace and hastily spread silken carpets before him, and the king and queen themselves came down the steps into the courtyard to welcome the horse and its rider.

“Our child has returned,” they said, but what was their amazement when they beheld the young man.

“Speak, sir!” cried the king; “who are you?”

The young man had leapt from the saddle and bent his knee. “Sire,” he cried, “I am a poor youth, but I fear nothing. Tell me who is the owner of this horse, and if aught has befallen her I will search the world and take no rest till I have restored her unto you.”

“Alas, young sir!” cried the queen. “Have you not seen our daughter?”

“Nay, madam,” said the young man, and there and then he told her how he had found first the golden horseshoe and, after many adventures, the little horse wandering in the forest without a rider.

“This is terrible!” said the king. “Know, young sir, that the fairy steed was given to our only daughter by Queen Mab herself, whose god-daughter she is. Once every year she mounts the winged horse and is carried right away into the heart of Fairyland on a visit to her fairy god-mother. There she remains seven days nor has she ever failed to return bearing the Queen’s gift.

But now I fear she is lost!" And he wrung his hands.

"Do not despair," cried the young man. "It is quite plain what must be done. I will to Queen Mab herself; if the princess is with her, all is well. If not, the Fairy Queen will tell me where to find her and I will assuredly bring her back." Then he rose, swiftly regained the saddle and shaking the bridle so that all the little bells rang, cried, "Hey for Fairyland!" At the word the wonderful horse again unfurled its wings and rose in the air; the young man took off his hat and waved it to the people below, the king cried good luck to him, the queen fluttered her handkerchief and all the people cheered. "This time," said the young man to himself, "I will keep awake and see where I am going," for he thought it would be a fine thing to be able to find his way again even if he had to walk there and back; however, in a very little while he began to feel unaccountably drowsy and laying his head on the horse's mane soon fell fast asleep.

When he awoke he was in the very heart of Fairyland.

It was the most beautiful country he had ever

seen. The little horse had come down to drink from one of the streams which water the land and the young man slipped from the saddle and wandered slowly by the banks with the bridle in his hands, admiring all he saw and wondering how he should find Queen Mab. And it seemed that he had only to think of a flower he would like to see and immediately thousands blossomed around him. Did he wish for violets, there they were, blue and white, at his very feet. He thought of water-lilies, and a pool of water close at hand was instantly covered with them. "Roses are the flowers for me," said the young man and before his very eyes a green shoot pushed its way out of the ground, grew tall and graceful, put forth leaves and buds, and burst into hundreds of blossoms which filled the air with their perfume. The young man caressed their rosy petals, then called to the little horse which was contentedly cropping the tender grass. "Come," said he, "we are wasting time; we must find the Queen." As he spoke he heard the sound of the most wonderful music in the forest near at hand.

"Oh, what is that?" he cried.

"Those are Queen Mab's horns," said a voice

at his elbow, and looking round he saw a little fellow dressed in a green jerkin, who looked at him with a cheeky smile.

“Why, where did you spring from?” said the young man. “You were not here a moment ago!”

“I’ve been here all the time,” said the little fellow. “So have we all.” And sure enough, as the young man looked around he was astonished to see hundreds of little elves and maidens in green jerkins and robes of gossamer marshalling themselves in ranks to see the Queen pass. All the time the wonderful music was drawing nearer and presently out of the trees stepped Queen Mab’s trumpeters blowing upon their silver horns and making the most entrancing melodies. Next came a troop of fairy knights and then Queen Mab’s maidens dressed in all the colours of the rainbow and dancing hand in hand as they passed; and in the middle of them all was Queen Mab herself. Her coach was made like a golden dandelion with a canopy of green leaves and it was drawn by a cloud of blue butterflies harnessed with threads of silver spun by a big silver spider.

The young man stepped forward and fell on

his knees. "How now, mortal!" cried the Fairy Queen. "How came you hither and what is your errand to us?"

"Most noble lady," answered the young man, "your god-daughter is lost and I have found her steed, which brought me hither. I have come to beg that by means of your wisdom you will find out where she is imprisoned and I will immediately go to her rescue."

"And so you shall!" cried her Majesty. "I see you are a lad of spirit, and though you might very well leave me to rescue my own god-daughter in my own time without any trouble at all, you shall have your own way. Fairies, bring me the sword of exceeding sharpness."

At once a score of fairies flew to do her bidding and returned bearing a wonderful sword in a scabbard of gold attached to a belt studded with jewels. At Queen Mab's command the young man girded it on himself, then mounted the winged horse once more. The Fairy Queen left her chariot and seated herself on the horse's head and away they went through the air again. The young man did not go to sleep this time, but it was not of much consequence, for as all the world

knows the way out of Fairyland is quite easy; it is the way in which is so hard to find.

In a very short while, however, he saw they were flying over a desolate heath and in the very middle of the heath was a strong tower where an ogre lived. The horse came to the ground a short distance from the one door into the tower and Queen Mab floated from her seat on the horse's head and took the bridle from the young man's hand. "Into the tower with you, young sir!" she commanded. "And do not return without my god-daughter."

The young man did not wait to be told twice. Drawing his weapon he strode to the door and knocked with the hilt of his sword. Immediately the door burst open and a dog with three heads flew out ready to tear him in pieces; the young man cut off the three heads with one blow of his sword and rushed into the tower without more ado. There he was set upon by a band of stout minions, but he knocked them all on the head one after the other and went in search of the ogre, whom he soon encountered. He was the most horrible sight the young man had ever seen, covered all over with hair, with teeth like a wolf

and with finger-nails like the talons of an eagle. He had a huge battle-axe in his hands and was roaring with fury. "Do not suppose I am afraid of you," said the young man. "I have slain your dog and overthrown your minions and I will soon dispose of you also!" And he was as good as his word; with one blow of his sword he knocked the battle-axe out of the ogre's hands and with the next he cut off his head; so that was the end of him.

"Now to find the princess!" cried the young man, dashing up the stair of the tower. He looked in all the rooms and at the very top he found her. She was lying on the bare floor fast asleep, for she was quite worn out with weeping; one end of a heavy chain was fastened to her wrist and the other end was secured to a ring in the wall. The young man drew the sword of exceeding sharpness and with a single blow he severed the chain as though it had been a piece of cotton; then he lifted the princess very carefully and carried her downstairs and out of the horrible tower to Queen Mab.

"Wake up, ladybird," said Queen Mab, and the princess woke up, and who can describe her

joy at finding herself free? As for the young man, he thought he had never in his life seen anybody so beautiful as the princess, not even Queen Mab herself.

“Up into the saddle with you,” said her Majesty. “The winged horse will carry you both.” And certainly it was the most wonderful horse in the world, for it made no bones about the double load, nor did it seem too small, but just the right size. So Queen Mab gave the bridle a little shake and immediately they rose in the air.

“Now, child,” said the Queen, “tell me how you came to lose your way to Fairyland and fall into the clutches of this horrible ogre.”

“Godmother,” said the princess, “as I was flying through the air I beheld a poor lame child limping along the highway, and though it is your command that when once I have mounted the fairy horse to visit you I must not break my journey, I was so moved with pity that I disobeyed you. I guided the horse to earth and persuaded the child to mount with me, and together we cantered along the road until we reached the cottage where she dwelt. But when I had bidden

her farewell I discovered that my horse had cast one of its golden shoes; then I was perplexed, for I did not like to present myself before you with my steed in such a condition nor did I know where to get it shod. So I rode a little way into the woods close at hand while I pondered what to do and there I was immediately pounced upon by the ogre. The fairy horse escaped but I was borne off and cast into chains, nor do I know now why I was not devoured a week ago."

"I can tell you," said Queen Mab. "I knew instantly that you were in trouble, but I was at the time much occupied with another of my god-children who was in even worse straits. So I looked in my magic mirror and saw where you were, and without more ado I bestowed such a toothache upon your captor that it was out of the question for him to think of devouring anything. And by the time I was able to give my whole attention to you this young man had begun meddling in your affairs with such good will that I thought it best to let him have his own way. And now here we are at your own palace and below me I espy your father and mother coming out to greet us."

It was indeed as Queen Mab said. Hardly had she spoken when the wonderful horse floated to earth and there they were all safe and sound in the courtyard of the palace.

“Greeting to my royal brother and sister,” said Queen Mab. “Here is your daughter, none the worse for her adventure, and here is a fine brave young son-in-law for you. I am much pleased with him and I have bestowed the sword of exceeding sharpness upon him as a sign of my favour.”

Thereupon the king and queen kissed her hands and said, “We are content.” And the people threw their caps in the air and shouted: “Hurray! We are content.” And the princess and the young man joined their hands and said, “We are content.” And there was really nobody else left who mattered. So they were married with great rejoicing and lived happily ever after.

And once every year the princess and her husband mount the wonderful horse and fly away into the very heart of Fairyland and they have never lost their way and always come back safely.

## *Under the Ground*

*A hundred steps below the ground  
A hidden treasure will be found;  
If you pursue the winding stair  
A sleeping princess you'll see there.*

*Another hundred steps descend,  
You shall have riches without end,  
But when you reach the bottom stair  
You'll find a dragon in his lair.*

*Cut off his head and do not bide;  
Make haste to wake your royal bride;  
Fill up your pockets, then run up the stair  
Back to the sun and the good fresh air.*

# The Castle of Delight

**O**NCE upon a time a company of travellers were going along a road when night came on while they were still far from the town. Moreover, there was not so much as a cottage to be seen where they might rest and find a crust of bread to refresh them. So it was resolved to enter the woods close at hand and to pass the night as best they could, wrapped in their cloaks.

One of them, however, said: "Let all of you do as you have decided; I for my part will go a little further along the road. When I was a boy there was great talk of a castle hereabouts which was said to be very hospitable to travellers. If I find it, I will send word back to you." So he bade them farewell and stepped boldly down the road.

He kept a good look-out and was soon rewarded by seeing two twinkling lights, and on running thither, found them to be shining from

the postern gate of a mighty castle. He sprang across the drawbridge and banged upon the door, which was immediately opened to him.

“What do you want?” said the warder.

“Rest and entertainment for the night,” said the man.

“Come in and be welcome,” said the warder, and at once took him into a large hall where a great fire was burning, and called one to wait upon him. The servitor hastily spread a table and cut him a large slice of venison pasty and a piece of the finest white bread, and when the traveller was thoroughly warmed and fed, asked him if there was ought else he required. The man had forgotten all about his travelling companions, so he replied that he wanted nothing more but a bed; thereupon the servitor showed him his sleeping chamber and the man immediately fell fast asleep.

In the morning when he awoke he was astonished to find himself lying under a furze bush in the midst of a barren heath and no sign of a castle anywhere to be seen. He rubbed his eyes and concluded it was all a dream, and as it would have been very troublesome to go back and look

for his travelling companions, he continued his journey alone and was never heard of any more.

Meanwhile the rest of the travellers had passed a very miserable night. It was both cold and wet and when day dawned they were in a pitiable state; moreover, one of the company, an old merchant, had fallen sick and could not stir hand or foot. They were ready to despair when a young travelling musician who was seeking his fortune spoke up and said: "Bide here one day more and I will go in search of help. Now day is come it should be easy to find this castle, but if I do not succeed I will return at nightfall. So if you do not see me again you will know some evil has befallen me, and you must push on and fend for yourselves as best you can." So they bade him good speed and he hastened down the road.

He searched and searched, but no sign could he see of even the humblest habitation, and at nightfall he was forced to retrace his steps, lamenting his bad fortune. All of a sudden he was astounded to see two lights twinkling quite close at hand and to discover that they belonged to the postern gate of a mighty castle.



*“All of a sudden he was astounded to see two  
lights twinkling quite close at hand.”*



“I must be bewitched!” he cried. “There was certainly no castle here when I passed along the road this morning.” However, he hastened across the drawbridge and banged upon the door.

“What do you want?” said the warder who opened to him.

“There is a company of poor travellers perishing of cold and hunger in the woods,” said the young man. “Send help, I beg of you, and I will guide you to the place where they are.”

“You may come in yourself and be welcome, and your friends also,” said the warder. “But no one that is here may set foot outside the gate nor may anything whatever be taken away. Be advised, come in, rest and be thankful.”

“What?” cried the young man. “Leave my friends to perish? Nay, I should be disgraced for ever. Keep a good light burning, master warder, and I will seek out my companions and guide them hither.”

“Then hasten all you may,” said the warder, “for if you delay, at midnight the doors will be locked and none may enter.”

So the young man ran back to the road and hurried to find his companions. He had the great-

est difficulty in the world, for it was pitch dark and the road was rough. At last when he almost despaired he heard a shout and soon found them huddled together very miserably by the roadside. Then he told them his news and set out to guide them back, but the old merchant was so sick they could not move quickly, and the young man was afraid the gates would be closed before they could reach them. So he bade those who were able to hasten on and keep a sharp look-out for two twinkling lights, and he would follow slowly with the old merchant, and this they did and reached the castle in safety. It was nearly midnight, however, when the young man and his sick companion came in sight of the postern, and the warder was looking anxiously forth and crying, “Hasten! Hasten!” Then the young man took the old merchant on his back and began to run, and he crossed the drawbridge and the warder reached out and pulled him through the postern gate just as it struck midnight, and the door shut behind him of its own accord.

When he entered the hall, he found all his companions had been provided with dry raiment and were feasting and making merry. Two serv-

ing-men immediately ran forward and carried the old merchant off to bed, where he was tended with the utmost kindness, while the seneschal of the castle bowed to the young man and greeted him with the greatest consideration.

“If I mistake not,” said the seneschal, “you are the gentleman we have been expecting. Be pleased to come with me.”

The young man protested he was only a poor musician, but the seneschal did not appear to hear, so he followed him into a splendid apartment, hung with cloth of gold and fitted with every imaginable convenience. A page came running with a goblet of crystal filled with a sparkling cordial which he presented on bended knee, and when the young man had drained the last drop he forgot that he had ever felt cold or tired or hungry in his life. Two servants then came and brought him water to wash and stripped off his old clothes and arrayed him in a complete suit of the richest apparel he had ever seen, and when all was done the seneschal bowed very low and informed him that the whole castle was at his disposal. Everyone then withdrew

with the utmost courtesy and left the young man alone.

“This is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of,” said the young man, and he pinched himself to make sure that he was not dreaming. However, he seemed quite wide awake, so he began to look round him and to examine the apartment with the greatest interest. Presently he noticed that in one corner the golden curtains which covered all the rest of the wall were looped slightly back and going thither he found a small door of massive oak. The key was in the door, so he turned it and went through, and immediately found himself in a lofty chamber which was filled with strains of the softest music. The young man could see no musicians, so he listened very attentively in the hope of discovering whence the music came and presently he thought he could distinguish words as though someone were singing very softly. So then he listened harder than ever and sure enough a voice repeated:

“Come, play me,  
I pray thee!”

“Who are you and where are you?” said the young man, but the voice only sang more sweetly:

“Come, play me,  
I pray thee!”

So he began to search the chamber carefully and before long he discovered a golden harp hanging on the wall and the voice came out of the harp and it was sweeter than a nightingale’s and gentle as a dove’s. The young man lifted down the harp from the wall and seating himself on a low stool began to play; immediately the chamber was filled with the most entrancing melody and the voice of the harp sang more beautifully than ever:

“Master, search the castle through,  
All that’s here belongs to you,  
If you be brave and strong.  
If you’re not, at break of day  
All of this will fade away  
As fades away my song.”

Then there was silence, but the young man swept his hand once more across the strings and said, “Sing on, dear harp,” and the harp sang:

“Like the jewel in the casket,  
Like the peach within the basket,  
Here there lurks a treasure.  
Find and keep it if you can;  
If you prove yourself a man,  
All must do your pleasure.”

Again there was silence, but the young man swept his fingers once more across the strings and said, “Sing on, dear harp,” and the harp sang:

“Let no living mortal wight,  
Be she lady, be he knight,  
Treat you with disdain.  
If with joy you’d fill your cup,  
Boldly take the challenge up  
And give it back again.”

“Excellent and sound advice,” said the young man, slinging the harp upon his shoulder. “Now to find this treasure and make my fortune.” So saying he hastened from the chamber, along a magnificent picture gallery and found himself at the foot of the principal staircase of the castle. There was no time to be lost, so he bounded up

the stairs and found himself in another gallery with vast corridors to the right and left leading to various apartments, and immediately in front of him was a massive door of ebony and silver.

“I have always found that the kernel of the nut is in the centre,” said the young man, “so I will waste no time to right or left.” Thereupon he opened the door in front of him and found himself in an antechamber lit by a single lamp. Before him was another door of ebony and over it was inscribed in silver:

“He who would win the pearl must first open the oyster.”

“No sooner said than done,” said the young man, and opened the second door and went through. He found himself in a vast and beautiful chamber entirely hung with cloth of silver and lit with a number of lamps each made of a single opal. In the centre of the room was a low couch spread with the skins of the white fox, and lying on the rugs was the most beautiful lady the young man had ever seen. She was fast asleep and four waiting-maids were seated beside her, two at the head and two at the feet. Round the

walls of the room were inscribed the words, “Behold the pearl within the oyster.”

The young man drew near and knelt beside the couch, and as he did so he saw that the lady was muttering to herself in her sleep and two tears forced themselves between her eyelids and rolled down her cheeks.

“Poor lady,” he said; then he turned to the maids and asked: “Why do you not wake your mistress? Do you not see she is in trouble?”

“She is dreaming of all that is happening in the world,” said one of the maids, “and it is as much as our lives are worth to awaken her.”

“Say you so?” said the young man. “Well, I will awaken her myself.” Thereupon he took the harp from his shoulder and began to play a merry tune. Immediately the lady ceased muttering and slowly opened her eyes, then she raised herself on the couch and stared at the young man.

“Unmannerly bumpkin!” she said, and boxed his ears. Then she laid herself down again and was fast asleep in a moment.

“Oho!” said the young man. “Is that the way of it? How long has your lady been of this mind?”

“For many a weary year,” answered the waiting-maid who had spoken before. “She had the ill luck to offend a certain wizard who sought shelter here and was most hospitably treated, as are all travellers who come this way. But this infamous creature, envious of our lady’s riches and good fortune and wishing to make himself master of the castle, demanded her hand in marriage. When this was refused, out of revenge he caused her to drink a vile potion which cast her into the uneasy sleep in which she now lies before you.”

“Ungrateful wretch!” cried the young man. “Would that I had him here.”

“Since that hour,” continued the waiting-maid, “our lady has slept continually, only waking at long intervals and never remaining awake more than a few seconds. And while she sleeps she dreams of naught but wretchedness and misery and sees all the most unhappy things that come to pass in the world. As for this place that was erstwhile called the Castle of Delight and a refuge for weary travellers, it is now but a place of misery and a snare, for at cockcrow every morning the castle and all belonging to it sink

into the ground, while the wayfarer who rests here wakens to find himself leagues away in desolate country, exposed to wind and weather."

"Why then do you receive them?" asked the young man.

"It is our doom," replied the maid, "to the intent that those who were wont to bless us may now curse us and our lot become more wretched; besides we always hoped that some day a traveller would arrive strong enough to break the spell. As for our lady, who was formerly of the most sweet and gentle disposition imaginable, she is completely changed and so long as she remains awake is utterly intractable."

"Say you so?" said the young man. "Then shall she be awakened immediately." So saying, he bent over the lady and shook her by the shoulder. She awoke instantly and started to her feet, trembling with rage. "Get you gone, varlet!" she cried and dealt the young man such a box on the ear that he staggered across the room; then she laid herself down once more and at once fell fast asleep.

"I am the master in this castle," said the young man, "and all must do my pleasure. Go, one of

you, to the hall where the travellers are being entertained and fetch me the priest who is among the company; hasten and tarry not. And you others be ready to help me with your mistress when I awaken her the third time."

The maid sped away as fast as she could, and was back again in a trice leading the holy man. Then the young man stooped over the lady once more and this time he held her firmly by both wrists while he shook her and cried, "Wake up! Wake up!" As soon as she was awake she leapt to her feet and would have struck the young man again, but he held her wrists fast while he said: "Come now, this will not do! All that is in this castle belongs to me, so you must treat me with consideration. This good priest shall marry us at once; then if the castle sinks into the ground you will be left behind with me, safe and sound, for a good wife always stays with her husband."

Then she fought and struggled and screamed and bit, but the priest knew that the young man had been kind to the sick merchant and all his companions and he did not doubt that he would be good to the lady, so he hastened to pronounce them man and wife and blessed them. And as

the young man slipped his ring on her finger she became suddenly gentle, and when he kissed her she thanked him sweetly for having saved her and all her household from their miserable state.

Then the maids hastened to the windows and drew the curtains and behold, day was dawning and the castle had not sunk into the ground! And while they watched the sun rise, the harp began to murmur,

“Come, play me,  
I pray thee!”

So the young man swept his hand across the strings and the chamber was filled with melody while the harp sang:

“Master, you have proved right well,  
Stronger than a wizard’s spell  
Is your good intent.

Yours is now this goodly treasure,  
Joy and fortune beyond measure,  
Prithee, be content.”

“Indeed I am content,” said the young man.  
“And so am I,” said the beautiful lady.

“And so are we all,” said the waiting-maids. And as they spoke, there was the most tremendous cheering and shouting, and all the people in the castle came running, with the seneschal at their head, to thank the young man for having proved himself stronger than the wizard, and saved their mistress. So there was the greatest rejoicing and all the travellers were invited to the wedding feast and shown the wonders of the castle. There were rooms carved and painted to look like glades of forest trees, and other rooms which resembled groves of coral under the sea, and there were fountains and terraces and gardens wherein grew every fruit to be found in the world, but they all agreed that nothing was more marvellous than the golden harp which hung upon the young man’s chair and sang sweetly while everybody feasted.

And when they had made merry for a fortnight and the old merchant had recovered from his sickness the travellers went their way, laden with gifts and praising their entertainment. And from that time forth the fame of the Castle of Delight spread over the whole world and every traveller who spent a night there blessed his good

fortune. As for the young man and his bride, they governed the country round with the greatest wisdom and discretion, while the lady was famed for her beauty and sweetness of disposition. So they all lived happily ever after.

## *Hard Times*

**K**INGS are out of fashion  
And my harp is out of tune;  
The queen has gone to market  
To sell her silver shoon.

But the prince shall be my sweetheart  
And he shall seek renown;  
And I will cut his supper  
Both of white bread and of brown.

And when I've put my house to rights  
And he has won the day,  
Then I'll tune up my harp again  
And joy will come to stay.

# The Story of the Learned Man

**O**NCE upon a time there was a certain learned man who lived at the court of a great queen and devoted himself to the pursuit of knowledge. The queen was accustomed to consult him in all matters of difficulty and had often been heard to say that she would not have been without his services for the half of her kingdom. Nevertheless, he lived very plainly with only his books for company and gave himself no airs whatever.

One day the queen came to see him in great distress. "I have come to consult you," she said, "about my youngest daughter, who occasions me the deepest sorrow. She does not behave as befits a daughter of mine, but turns the whole palace topsy-turvy. She beats the ladies-in-waiting, is sullen when she should be gay, and lively when

she should be quiet, puts her elbows on the table and bites her nails in an ill-bred manner."

The learned man worked it out by long measure and worked it out by square measure and when he had finished he said: "The long and the short of it is, your daughter is bewitched. How long has she been in this state?"

"A twelve-month," said the queen, "but I have striven to conceal it. However, the truth can no longer be hidden. What do you advise?"

Then said the learned man, "I will consult the stars and seek wisdom in my books, and I have great hope that a way out of this difficulty will be found."

A week later he presented himself before the queen and requested a private audience, and when this was graciously granted to him he begged that the princess might be summoned, as what he was about to say concerned her very closely. So the princess was fetched, and when she came she flung herself down upon a stool without so much as a curtsey and at once began biting her nails in an ill-bred manner.

Then said the learned man: "Madam, I have discovered what ails your daughter. When she

was born, the royal nurse was taking an airing in the palace grounds one morning when she was approached by an old woman who said to her, 'If you wish your little princess to grow up the most beautiful and accomplished lady in the world, bring her to me and I will dip her in a magic pool, and she shall have wisdom and beauty in such degree that every other princess shall look like a blackamoor beside her.' So one night the nurse secretly brought the baby to the old woman, who jumped on a broomstick and flew away over the mountains and dipped the baby in a black pool, leaving the nurse terrified. In a few seconds the old woman returned, tossed the child to the nurse and disappeared, chuckling horribly. The nurse in great distress sought out the wise man whose duty it was at that time to advise your Majesty and related to him all that had occurred, which he wrote down in his book. Then bidding the nurse say nothing, he made enquiries and found that the old woman, who was a most malevolent witch, had by great good fortune been captured by a valiant knight soon after leaving the palace gardens. And the knight would have slain her, but she bore a charmed life,

so he was forced to put her in prison, where she could do no more harm to anybody; and there she had to stay. And as the baby seemed not one penny the worse, the wise man bade the nurse keep her own counsel, which she did. Then in course of time, as you know, the wise man died and I became your Majesty's adviser, and I found the whole story written in his books. Now since your Majesty came to me in this matter I have been very busy, and I have discovered that the witch escaped from her prison exactly a twelve-month ago, and she is undoubtedly the cause of your daughter's behaviour, for she can do what she pleases with her on account of having dipped her in the magic pool when she was a baby."

Then said the queen, "Alas! what is to be done?"

"Do not despair," said the learned man. "There are mightier things than an old witch, and I will take your daughter out into the world and seek her deliverance."

"Good and trusty counsellor," said the queen, "it shall be as you say; and if you bring her back cured, I will give you the half of my kingdom."

So the learned man and the young princess set off together to visit all the countries of the world and see if anyone could free her from the power of the witch. They travelled on horseback with a number of serving-maids and men, but it was impossible for them to present themselves at any court, as the princess behaved so badly; so they were forced to lodge at the inns. And even there the princess would beat the servants and throw the food about till no one would wait upon her but the learned man himself. He, however, served her with the greatest patience, and wherever they went he enquired if any person of great wisdom and goodness dwelt in the neighbourhood, hoping to find someone who would tell him how to cure the princess. However, everybody he consulted assured him the case was quite hopeless and he might as well spare himself his pains.

Now one day, when the princess had been behaving worse than usual and he was at his wits' end what to do with her, he was sitting on a bench in the courtyard of the inn where they were lodging, when the landlord's little son came and begged him to tell him a story. Then the learned

man took the boy on his knee and told him of all the lands he had travelled through and the wonders he had seen, and when he had finished the boy said, "I can show you something much more wonderful than anything you have told me about, only it is a great secret and you must promise not to tell anybody about it."

So the learned man promised and the boy led him into the forest and showed him a little path hidden away where no one would see it, and they went along this path until they came to the foot of a big mountain which lay beyond the forest, and there the path stopped altogether. However, the boy kept straight on, scrambling over boulders and climbing here and jumping there and all of a sudden he cried out, "Here it is!" And there was a stairway of pure gold and slippery as ice set in the side of the mountain and leading right to the top.

"Nobody ever comes here but me," said the boy, "and the beautiful lady who lives in the mountain at the very top. She is the wisest woman in the world and can tell you anything. Sometimes she comes down the stairway and talks to me, and tells me such wonderful stories

and sings so beautifully that I could almost believe I was in heaven; but I have never been able to mount the stairway for it is slippery as ice, and as fast as I get up two steps I fall down again."

Then said the learned man, "Let me try," and he began carefully ascending the golden stairs, but when he reached the third, his feet shot out from under him and he slid to the bottom with a rush. And he had no better success when he tried again; nevertheless, he made up his mind he would get to the top if possible, because he greatly desired to see the beautiful lady who lived in the mountain, for he was convinced she could tell him how to cure the princess.

However, he saw that it was likely to prove a long and hazardous undertaking, and it would not do to leave the princess with no protection but her waiting-maids and men; so kissing the boy and promising the utmost secrecy, he hurried back to the inn to make arrangements for the princess's safety.

Now it happened that just as he returned to the inn three handsome princes rode down the highway and called to the landlord to bring them

wine to quench their thirst. And while the landlord was serving them the learned man enquired who they might be and was told they were the three sons of the king of that country and very valiant and accomplished knights. Thereupon the learned man presented himself before the princes and begged for a word with them.

“Young sirs,” he said, “I am the counsellor-in-chief to the Queen of the Southern Lands and am travelling upon her business. I have with me her youngest daughter, who is sadly afflicted, and I needs must leave her while I undertake a difficult journey in pursuance of my mistress’s commands. It is necessary that I should leave the princess in good hands, and if you will watch over her like true knights you will assist me to bring this business to a fortunate conclusion and greatly add to your knightly renown. But I warn you that the princess is very difficult to deal with and you should think well before you enter upon such a task.”

Then said the princes like one man, “Present us to the lady.”

Thereupon the learned man sent word to the princess that three strangers desired to wait upon

her, but when he led them into her presence she would take no notice of them whatever, but turned her back upon them and began biting her nails in an ill-bred manner.

Then said the eldest prince, who was of a haughty disposition: "What behaviour is this? I will not put up with such treatment." And he mounted his horse and rode away in a pet.

The second prince, however, who observed that the princess was very beautiful, spoke politely to the learned man and, saying he wished to be better acquainted with the lady, requested that they might all dine together. When the food was brought, however, the princess behaved worse than ever, and threw the dishes about the room and beat the learned man when he offered to wait upon her.

"This is worse than a kitchen wench," said the second prince. "I will have no more of it." So he too mounted and rode away.

Then the learned man wrung his hands in despair, but the third prince said: "Be comforted. I am convinced that no princess would behave like this unless she were greatly afflicted; doubtless some spell has been cast upon her. Go you

on your journey and I will watch over the lady like my own life, and when you return we will lay our heads together and see if we cannot devise some means for her relief."

Then the learned man blessed him and praised him for a true knight and commended the princess to his care. And staying only to put a little bread and some raisins in his wallet he bade the prince be vigilant and hastened away.

He soon found the secret path in the forest, but when he reached the foot of the mountain his troubles began. He climbed hither and thither, but there was now no path to guide him, and night came on and he had not found the golden stairway, though he was stiff and sore with clambering over the great boulders. However, he ate a little bread and laid himself down to sleep under a rock and in the morning he tried again. He wandered hither and thither all that day without success and tore his clothes to shreds and bruised himself from head to foot; however, he laid himself down at night in no wise discouraged, resolved to try again next morning. The next day his search was rewarded and at sundown he found himself at the foot of the

golden staircase, only too stiff and bruised to attempt the ascent, so he ate a little more of his bread and lay down to sleep under another big boulder. In the morning he dreamed that a beautiful lady came down the stairway and bent over him, singing so sweetly that he awoke. However, when he opened his eyes, there was no one to be seen, but the sun was shining on the golden stairs so brightly that he could not bear to look at it.

When he had made a scanty meal, he at once began to try to mount the stairway, but alas! the pure gold was polished to such a degree that it was more slippery than ice, and as fast as he got up two or three stairs, his foot would slip and he would roll to the bottom. And at the end of the day he was no further than at the beginning, only more bruised and tired than ever! So he spent another night under the boulder and just before he woke in the morning he dreamed that the same beautiful lady came down the golden steps and sang to him so sweetly that he awoke. However, when he opened his eyes, there was nothing to be seen but the sun shining on the

stairway so brightly that he could not bear to look at it.

He tried again all that day, but though he managed to mount as many as six stairs at a time he could get no further, and night found him at the foot of the stairway, more tired and bruised than ever, but still determined to get to the top by hook or by crook. And he continued trying for many days, and some days he had luck and could get up as many as twenty and some days he could get up none at all; but however high he managed to get, just before sundown he always slid right to the bottom and there he had to stay till next morning. And every morning just before he woke he had the same dream about the beautiful lady, though when he opened his eyes there was nothing to be seen but the sun shining on the golden stairway.

However, after trying and trying for many days, he grew so nimble and surefooted that one day he managed to get nearly halfway up the mountain before night came on and he lost his footing and slid to the bottom. The next morning he had the same dream, but when he opened his eyes, there was the beautiful lady herself bend-

ing over him and the learned man knew that she was the wise woman who dwelt in the mountain.

“Who are you, O ragged man?” said the wise woman. “And why do you wish to see me so much?”

Then said the learned man, “O gracious lady, I serve the Queen of the Southern Lands, and I wished to see you to learn if you could do anything for the unhappy princess my mistress has committed to my charge.”

Then the lady said, “Give me your hand and come with me, and I will share all my knowledge with you.” So the learned man gave her his hand and while she held it in her grasp he found that he could walk up the golden stairway as easily as the stairs in his mistress’s palace. And he quite forgot how bruised and cut and stiff he was, and at every step he took he felt stronger and more light of heart. And at the top of the stairway there was a door let in the side of the mountain and the wise woman bade him enter and let the mountain sprites who waited upon her bring him everything he desired.

So the mountain sprites led him to a cool chamber where was a perpetual spring of water

and a bath of white marble, and new raiment of the most costly and wonderful texture; and when he had bathed and arrayed himself handsomely he was conducted to the presence of the wise woman.

She was sitting in a lofty apartment at the top of the mountain. The roof was of pure gold supported by columns of marble encrusted with jewels, and all the furnishings were of the most beautiful description. There were great windows all round the room from whence it was possible to see all the kingdoms of the world, and the Four Winds had placed their gentlest breezes as sentinels on every side, so that none but the softest and most invigorating airs could enter.

The wise woman bade the learned man seat himself beside her and a gorgeous feast was at once spread in his honour. "I know all about you," said the wise woman, "and I have watched your efforts to ascend my difficult staircase with the greatest interest. And I tell you frankly that I have no doubt at all that at length you would have succeeded quite unaided, but I have conceived a high opinion of you and was minded to spare you some trouble."

The learned man thanked her very much for her goodness and begged her gracious help on behalf of the young princess who was so greatly afflicted through no fault of her own.

“Nothing could give me greater pleasure,” said the wise woman, drawing a ring from her finger. “Give this to the prince who now guards her and bid him place it on her finger and kiss her three times.”

Then the banquet being finished, she rose and gave her hand to the learned man and conducted him down the golden staircase to the foot of the mountain, where she bade him farewell and pointed out the easiest way back to the inn.

The learned man parted from her with the greatest regret, but he was most anxious to return to the unfortunate princess, so he did not linger but made all speed.

When he reached the inn, however, what was his consternation to find that the princess had mysteriously disappeared and the prince had gone in search of her and nothing had been heard of either of them for many days. While he was debating what to do, however, a page who had been in attendance on the prince rode into the

courtyard all covered in dust, and falling on one knee before the learned man said: "My master the prince begs that you will accompany me without delay. He has found the princess, who is guarded by a horrible dragon, and he only awaits your arrival to attack the monster and slay it."

Then the learned man hastily called for fresh horses and he and the page rode away as fast as they could gallop. They rode for seven days and nights, getting fresh horses where they could, and at last came to a most desolate country in which was a wilderness and there they found the prince awaiting them.

"Good friend," said the prince, "I am rejoiced to see you, for I am weary of waiting to destroy that dragon. Soon after you left the inn an old woman came desiring to see the princess and when she was denied admittance at the door she popped through a window and ran upstairs. And the next thing we heard was a horrible commotion in the chimney and we were just in time to see the witch fly away on a broomstick with the princess behind her. I at once started in pursuit and by good luck was guided to this spot by a

friendly magician whom I met on the road and who bears the witch a grudge. His art, however, was not strong enough to be of any assistance to me and he bade me farewell, bidding me rely upon my sword. The princess is in a garden in the very heart of the wilderness, guarded by the dragon, and I have forborne to slay the monster until your arrival, being of the opinion that it was wisest for her to remain where she was until we could devise means to place her out of the reach of the witch's magic, lest the moment she was free from the dragon she might be spirited away again and all trace of her be lost."

Then said the learned man: "Fear no more, but take this ring. When you have slain the monster place the ring on the princess's finger and kiss her three times, when she will be completely restored."

Then the prince hastily led the way into the midst of the wilderness, and there was a magical garden with all manner of fruits in it and they could see the princess sitting under one of the trees biting her nails as usual in an ill-bred manner. At the gate lay an immense dragon with two scaly wings and horrible claws and when it



*“At the third kiss she rose . . . and thanked the  
prince and the learned man most sweetly.”*



saw the prince it spread its great wings with a noise like thunder and rushed upon him breathing smoke and flames. The prince, however, possessed a stout heart in his breast and was not easily dismayed, so he drew his trusty sword and waited for the monster to come on. Soon a terrible battle was raging and twenty times it looked as if the prince must be borne down and slain. But he always managed to leap aside just in time and to deal a good blow at his enemy; and at last he drove his sharp sword clean through the dragon's heart and the terrible monster fell dead. Then the prince flung his sword to the learned man, rushed to the gate of the garden and climbed over without waiting for anything. The moment the princess saw him she began to scream at the top of her voice, but he took no notice whatever but put the wise woman's ring on her finger without more ado and kissed her three times. At the first kiss she screamed and struggled and bit like a wild animal; at the second kiss she dropped down in a swoon and lay as if dead; and at the third kiss she rose and stood on her feet completely restored to her proper frame of mind and thanked the prince and the learned

man most sweetly for delivering her from the power of the witch.

“And indeed,” she said, “I can never thank you sufficiently, for I was compelled against my will to behave so badly, which added to my misery.”

Then said the prince: “Fair and gentle lady, I rejoice to have been of the slightest service to you. This is the happiest day of my life.”

So they all rode back to the court of the Queen of the Southern Lands, and there the prince and princess were wedded with the greatest rejoicings, and they lived happily ever after.

As for the learned man, nothing was too good for him. The queen would have loaded him with benefits, but he refused all, saying it was sufficient honour to have accomplished his task and brought happiness to his royal mistress. So he retired to his own house and the company of his books and gave himself up to the pursuit of learning.

But once every year he received a command from the wise woman to visit her in her home at the top of the mountains, when he would at once forsake all and ride away to the foot of the

golden staircase. There he would find the wise woman herself waiting to conduct him to the top and there he would stay till a month had expired, when he had to return to his own country. And the wise woman taught him by degrees all her own wisdom and showed him from her windows all the wonderful things that were happening in the world, so that at last the fame of his learning spread through every kingdom and reached even to the borders of Fairyland.

## *You and Me*

*If I went out into the world  
And you were left behind,  
While I went searching high and low  
Adventures strange to find,*

*I should not care a penny piece  
If you weren't there to see,  
And couldn't share in all the luck  
Good fortune sent to me.*

*So fetch your wallet and your sword  
And you shall be my brother,  
And when we reach our journey's end  
We'll up and begin another!*



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